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From a painting by Marjorie Quennell

OLD ENGLISH CUSTOMS AND CEREMONIES

By

F. J. DRAKE-CARNELL

*Illustrated by Photographs
and Prints*

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TO MY WIFE

REFERENCE

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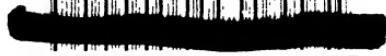
PREFACE

THIS book owes its inception to a variety of causes. In the course of many years of lecturing on the old buildings and towns of England, it was only natural that I should again and again, in my research work, note down the customs and traditions connected with the places I was describing. These ancient things grow on one, and in time a deep reverence for them is awakened. My work also brought me into contact with hundreds of visitors from abroad, and questions were often put to me as to the origin of this or that ceremonial. I found that all our visitors and most of our own people are very little aware even of the existence of many of these customs, but that, on the other hand, their interest, when informed of them, is great and real.

It was my good fortune to be introduced by a friend to the wonderful series of books which Messrs. B. T. Batsford, Ltd., have published under the title of the "British Heritage Series." Surely we have no greater heritage, as Englishmen, than the old traditions and customs of our forefathers. Washington Irving once wrote: "If you would understand the soul of England you must wander far in the highways and byways of England's countryside . . . ; attend wakes and fairs and other rural festivities . . ." Although this was written over a hundred years ago it remains true to-day, for foreign visitors have often told me that they had no idea of the English character and *ethos* until they had spent some months here. We are accused abroad of insularity and conservatism, but in England those same detractors find nothing but praise for our tenacity of custom.

Whatever may be the reason, this country has a greater wealth of ceremony and tradition than any other, and it is with the desire that more of our younger generation should become familiar with these things

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that I have collected the material for this book. I must thank all those who have helped me so extensively in the preparation of the material, my friends for their encouragement and my publishers for their suggestions and advice. I owe a great debt to the Librarians of the Guildhall Library, London, the Central Library, Birmingham and the Hampstead Public Library for their ready help with books of reference and the facilities for study which they often went out of their way to provide. I have endeavoured to express my appreciation in the text of the kindness of Sir George Bonner, Mr. Potts of Banbury, the Rector of Farnham and many others who either confirmed my notes or else dashed my hopes with such words as "that custom was dropped because . . ." In each case the information was valuable.

I have endeavoured to check every ceremony included in this book, but sometimes information was denied me. If any customs have been omitted, or not described to the satisfaction of all my readers, I must apologise; but the material is vast, and the scope of this volume small.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

THE Publishers must acknowledge their obligation to the photographers whose work is represented in the following pages, namely, Bippa Ltd., for Fig. 16; Charles E. Brown, for Fig. 24; Central Press Photos, for Figs. 11, 27, 35, 42, 48, 63, 85, 90, 92, 98 and 103; Herbert Felton, F.R.P.S., for Fig. 79; Fox Photos Ltd., for Figs. 5, 6, 12, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 40, 41, 50, 58, 62, 66, 68, 71, 74, 77, 80, 82, 83, 94, 97 and 104; George Hepworth, for Fig. 78; The Keystone View Co., for Figs. 15, 20, 25, 34, 37, 44, 45, 46, 54, 61, 76, 84, 86, 99 and 101; The London News Agency, for Figs. 10, 19, 21 and 49; Dr. Moholy-Nagy from *Black Star*, for Figs. 100 and 105; The Photographic News Agency, for Fig. 18; Sport & General Ltd., for Figs. 4, 38, 55, 67, 89 and 93; the Chief Librarian of the Birmingham Public Libraries, for Figs. 64, 65 and 75 from the Sir Benjamin Stone collection; Sir Joseph Tichborne, for Fig. 57; *The Times*, for Figs. 8, 13, 14, 56 and 72; the Topical Press Agency, for Figs. 7, 9, 17, 22, 23, 32, 36, 39, 70, 81, 87, 88, 91, 96, 102, 106 and 107; Miss M. Wight, for Figs. 51, 52 and 53; Wide World Photos, for Fig. 47; Thanks are also due to Mrs. M. Quennell, for specially preparing the drawings reproduced as the Frontispiece and Fig. 43; Miss Marie Gray of Messrs. W. T. Spencer Ltd., for the coloured prints, Figs. 2 and 3, and Miss Norah Davenport for the line drawings which appear in the text. The remainder of the illustrations are in the publishers' collection.

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"MAY DAY" AND "GUY FAWKES," REPRODUCED FROM
TWO PRINTS OF 1821

OLD ENGLISH CUSTOMS

I

THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT (1)

“WITH common-sense and goodwill as our shield and buckler, we have kept, in spite of all difficulties, our heritage of liberty, alike for the individual and for our many constituent races.” These were the words of His Late Majesty King George V, on May 8th, 1935, to the representatives of the Dominions and Colonies.

Our heritage of liberty is indeed a precious thing, and at no other time in our history have we been more aware of this than at the present, when we see daily how the liberty of the individual is confined and curtailed in other countries less fortunate than our own. It is to Parliament that every free Englishman owes his liberty as an individual, for the two Houses have always been the first to resist encroachments on their rights and ours. Many of us may not agree as to the justice of the cause of Oliver Cromwell, or wish to condone the execution of King Charles I; but we cannot deny that the determined resistance of the Parliament of the time to what they considered unjust demands on the part of the Crown was, and is, a vital factor of the famous liberty of the people to-day.

Many of the old customs and ceremonies that are a part of the life of the Houses of Parliament are the outward sign of these liberties, and their preservation, even though to the stranger they may seem childish and even absurd, has become as essential as the liberties and rights themselves. Members are rightly determined

to allow no curtailment of, or encroachment on, the customs and traditions of their respective Houses.

The Sovereign may not enter the House of Commons, and its Members must not refer to His Majesty's opinions or wishes in any matter when they are addressing the House. Such a remark would at once be greeted with cries of "Order! Order!" and the head of the House, the Speaker, would be sure to reprimand the offender for this breach of custom. The reason for this is not far to seek: the House is jealous of its right to make laws and reach its decisions without any outside influence, and the King's opinion might unduly sway the views of the Members. This is also the reason why no troops are allowed within a certain distance of the Parliamentary buildings and, if such bodies have to pass this boundary for the purpose of a review or procession, they must first obtain permission from the Speaker as the representative of the House of Commons.

The House of Lords is also never referred to by name, the designation "another place" being always used. The Commons do not even admit, at least officially, that the House of Lords exists, and when the Speaker has been summoned to the Upper House for the purpose of hearing the King's speech on the opening of Parliament, for hearing the Royal Assent given to Bills, or for any other purpose, he always returns to the Lower House and informs the Members, as if they had no idea at all of what had been happening, that such and such a procedure has been followed "in another place."

Full of ancient ritual and ceremony is the election of the Speaker, the official mouthpiece of the House, the chairman as it were, who presides at all the sittings, calls the members to order if necessary and, at the same time, is officially responsible for any failings on the part of the House.

When the House of Commons first meets after a General Election, or when the Speaker resigns his position, there is no head of the House to conduct its

business and nobody who has the necessary authority to call on any particular member to speak; the election is therefore conducted throughout in dumb show. Without a Speaker in the chair, the House cannot officially be in session, so the Great Mace, the symbol of the authority of the Commons, is not placed on its rests on the table in front of the Speaker's chair, but is out of sight on hooks fastened to the side of the table. In solemn silence the Clerk of the Commons rises and points to a member, who has previously stated his willingness to propose a Speaker, and then to another, who will second the motion. These two members then signify the person whom they wish to propose (and incidentally on whom the choice has already fallen after private discussion among the officials beforehand), and the House shows its silent approval.

The Speaker-Elect, for he cannot be termed the Speaker until the Crown has agreed to his election, is then conducted with a display of unwillingness on his part to the dais and he makes one of the few speeches of his career, when he thanks the members for the confidence they have shown in his ability and promises to uphold their rights and privileges to the best of his ability.

The Speaker must show that he is not really eager to assume his important position, for he is a representative member just like the others and, as Speaker, will not be able to speak on behalf of his constituents in the same way as an ordinary member. In the meantime, in the House of Lords, the Royal Commissioners have taken their seats and they now send their official messenger, the Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod, to the Commons to summon the Speaker-Elect for the Royal approval.

The latter, who is dressed in ordinary court dress and wears the plain wig of a barrister, makes his way, accompanied by his proposer and seconder, the Serjeant-at-Arms, who carries the Great Mace in the hollow of his arm, and some other privileged members, to the House

of Lords, and there at the bar of the House he says to the Royal Commissioners: "My Lords, I have to acquaint your Lordships that, in obedience to the Royal commands, His Majesty's most faithful Commons, in the exercise of their undoubted rights and privileges, have proceeded to the election of a Speaker. Their choice has fallen upon myself. I therefore present myself at your Lordships' Bar, and humbly submit myself to His Majesty's gracious approbation."

The Lord Chancellor, on behalf of the Commissioners, replies that "His Majesty is so fully sensible of your zeal for the public service and of your undoubted efficiency to execute the arduous duties, which his faithful Commons have selected you to discharge, that he most readily confirms the choice they have made." The Speaker-elect then asks that he shall be considered the mouthpiece of the House of Commons, and that all blame, where blame is thought necessary, for the acts of the House, shall be attributed only to him. He further requests freedom from arrest as his right, the power of free speech and free access to the Sovereign in time of need; and to all these the Royal Commissioners give their assent.

The Speaker then returns to the Lower House, stopping on the way to assume the gorgeous robes and full-bottomed wig of the Speaker and, preceded by the cry of "Make way for Mr. Speaker!" enters on his term of office.

On arrival at the House of Commons he takes his seat in the Speaker's chair and, when the Great Mace has been deposited on its rests by the Serjeant-at-Arms, rises and informs the House that his election has received the approval of the Crown, a fact that the Members are not supposed to know until he has acquainted them with it. The whole of this ritual has remained scarcely altered since the fourteenth century.

There are many other customs which remind us of the past history of our legislative assembly. Formerly, Westminster Palace and St. Stephen's stood well away

from the nearest buildings and from the road, and the Members had to traverse lonely and unlighted fields on their way to and from the House. This area was a happy hunting-ground for the footpads and highway-robbers that infested London, and many a worthy Member, hurrying home after a late session, was stopped and robbed almost within sight and sound of the Parliamentary buildings. To prevent the recurrence of such incidents, Members used to go home in groups accompanied by a link-boy with a torch or lantern and very often also by armed servants and retainers. To marshal the Members into groups, therefore, the ushers at the House used to go through the corridors when the House had finished its business for the day, shouting "Who goes home?" To-day, well-lighted Old Palace Yard and Parliament Square, with the ever-present police, present no danger of robbery, but still the cry of "Who goes home?" echoes through the corridors of the great building when the House rises in the evening. The only danger in that quarter of London now is from the ever-increasing traffic; but even from this the Member of Parliament is reasonably safe, for he has the right to have all traffic held up for him to cross the road, and nearly always avails himself of this privilege.

It is not generally known that the House of Commons has the power to arrest anybody, no matter whom, and to try them for any offence without reference to the Courts of Law. The Serjeant-at-Arms, who has his prison in the tower that houses the great bell, Big Ben, can call on any civil or military body to assist him in making an arrest. This power of the House was very cleverly described in the form of a novel by Mr. Bruce Graeme, and I much enjoyed reading it, for, unlike many historical novelists, Mr. Graeme held very strictly to fact in describing the procedure of impeachment.

In memory of the days of plots and counter-plots against Throne and Government, there is still the custom, and none is more carefully guarded, that no

Member may lock a door in the House, whether he be the Prime Minister himself or the humblest of the Members. Every Member has free access to every room in the Parliamentary buildings, and even when a room is being used for a committee or party meeting of the most secret nature the door remains unlocked and it is only courtesy that keeps the Members out.

The greatest of all plots against the Government was the celebrated Gunpowder Plot of 1605, and this has certainly not been forgotten at Westminster, even if the national celebrations have to some extent declined. Either in the evening of the day before the opening of Parliament, or at ten o'clock of the morning of the day itself, which is the more usual custom, a party of Beefeaters, or Yeomen Warders as they should be called, from the Tower of London (5), assembles in the Princes' Chamber, where they are joined by four Marshalmen in their frock-coats and tall hats, the resident engineer of the Palace of Westminster, an inspector of the Parliamentary police and other attendants. When all are ready, the Yeoman Usher, representing Black Rod, and the secretary to the Lord Chamberlain enter and, after the old candle-lanterns have been lit, the order to prepare for a search is given. Down into the basement, up into the galleries and along all the corridors go the Yeomen in their gorgeous scarlet and gold Tudor uniform and, tactfully ignoring the blaze of electric lights, peer and poke, with the lanterns in their hands, into every nook and cranny that could conceivably shelter a second Guy Fawkes. When the search has been completed, a message is sent to His Majesty to announce the fact, and the Yeomen Warders are given some light refreshment before returning to their duties at the Tower of London.

One part of the House of Commons is regarded as strictly *tabu*. This is the floor of the House, and nobody may set foot on it. If any official, such as the City Sheriffs, who often have occasion to come to Westminster, has business to transact in the House of

Commons, he may not pass the Bar on to the floor, and must even be careful that his foot does not cross the line of this bar; and even the messengers of the House, when they have occasion to come into the chamber to call a Member to the telephone or give him some message from outside, dare not tread on this "sacred" spot, and must sometimes perform the strangest acrobatic feats in order to reach a seat without treading on the floor. Government and Opposition face one another across this jealously guarded rectangle, and the two red lines in the carpet are regarded as two swords-lengths apart, a very significant reminder that debates in the House were not always such peaceful affairs as they are to-day. This line, which must not be over-stepped, was often very necessary to preserve that dignity and decorum of the Commons which is the object of such wonder to some of our foreign visitors from countries where fisticuffs are not infrequently a feature of Parliamentary debates.

Mention has already been made of St. Stephen's. It is to the vanished altar of the Chapel that the Members of the House of Commons bow when passing the dais, although most spectators think that this courtesy is being paid to the Speaker. This custom of bowing to a non-existent altar is the same in origin as the naval custom of saluting the quarter-deck which is mentioned elsewhere in this book. The bow in the House of Lords is different: there it is a courtesy to the Throne.

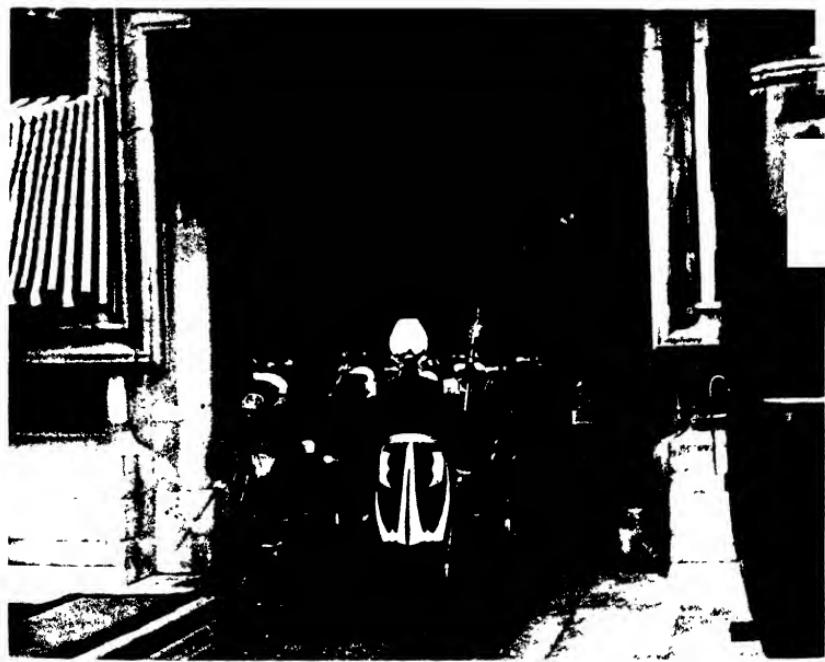
The House of Commons is very tenacious of its right to bar the entrance to the Chamber before the King's messenger, and to this custom they always adhere. When the Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod comes to the Lower House to summon the Commons to the House of Lords, he is preceded by the cry of "Way for Black Rod!" but, as soon as he reaches the door of the Commons, it is banged in his face. Black Rod then knocks with his ebony staff of office (the marks can be clearly seen on the door), and the Serjeant-at-Arms looks out in surprise through the grille to see who is

there. When he announces that the King's messenger craves admittance, the business of the House is at once interrupted, the Speaker signs to the Serjeant-at-Arms to open the door, and Black Rod enters to give his message to His Majesty's most faithful Commons.

Any description of the Parliamentary customs of England would be incomplete without some reference to the House of Keys and the "Thing" of the Isle of Man (44-5), for, if Westminster be termed the "Mother of Parliaments," this ancient assembly of the island must surely be the great grandmother! As its name implies, the Thing is of Scandinavian origin, dating back to the ninth century when the greater part of England was under Danish and Norwegian domination, whereas Westminster is some five hundred years younger; but an account of this ancient Legislative Assembly appears elsewhere in these pages.

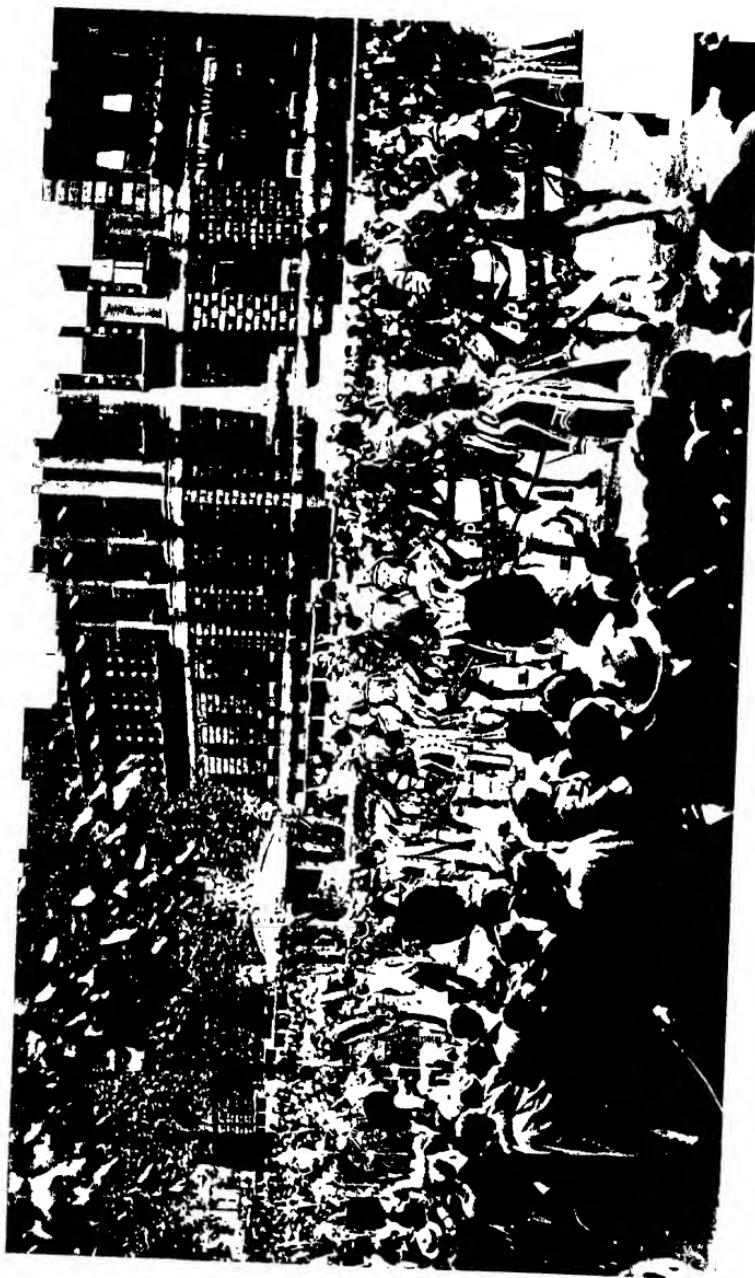


THE CHIEF WARDER OF THE TOWER OF LONDON LOCKS
THE GATES OF THE BYWARD TOWER



YEOMEN OF THE GUARD ON THEIR WAY TO SEARCH THE
VAULTS OF THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT PRIOR TO THE
OPENING OF A SESSION

6 THE KING AND QUEEN DRAWING IN SOUTH TO OPEN A PARLIAMENTARY SESSION.
PASSING THE HORSES GUARDS PARADE



II

THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT (2)

THE House of Lords is in some respects similar to the House of Commons, but in others it is totally different. The Upper House is a great legislative body, although, when one sees how comparatively few peers attend some of its sittings, one is inclined to think that its work may be less important than that of the House of Commons. This is an entirely incorrect view for, whilst Members of the Commons may lose their seats at any election, the peers, who sit by virtue of their birth, are there for the whole span of their lives. Often, through perhaps a lifelong study of some problem, they can form expert opinions and can speak with authority on matters which the average Member of the Lower House only knows by hearsay.

The Upper House has no chairman or officer to control its proceedings corresponding to the Speaker in the House of Commons, and each peer speaks when, and as, he thinks fit. The virtual head of the House is the Chairman of Committees, but the highest official is the Lord Chancellor, who represents the Crown. His earlier title was "The Keeper of the King's Conscience," for his position was formerly ecclesiastical, and he was the King's Confessor. To-day he presides over the House of Lords from his seat on the Woolsack, and it is interesting to note that this seat is not officially within the precincts of the House, so that, if the Lord Chancellor wishes to address it as a peer and not in his character of Lord Chancellor, he has to step a few paces away from the Woolsack and get into the House. The Woolsack was till recently stuffed with horsehair, but

is now happily filled with wool from every part of the Empire. It was formerly stuffed with that staple product of England from which it takes its name so that the peers might be ever reminded that the greatness of the country which they represented depended on the trade in wool.

Not every peer of the United Kingdom has the right to a seat in the House of Lords. All the peers of England may attend, but Scotland and Ireland may send only representative peers to the assembly, and many of the English lords sit under titles other than the ones by which they are generally known. The Duke of Buccleuch, for example, sits as the Earl of Doncaster, the Duke of Leinster as Viscount Leinster, and the Marquess of Waterford as Earl Tyrone. The Marquess of Londonderry is summoned as Earl Vane, and the Earl of Bessborough does not take his seat among the earls but among the barons, for he sits as Lord Ponsonby. These are only a few of the examples that can be found in the roll of peers. This roll is not a book of names, as is the case in the House of Commons, but is an actual roll made of parchment. It is prepared anew for each new Parliament by Garter King-at-Arms who, in all the glory of his wonderfully embroidered tabard of gold and scarlet with the Royal coat-of-arms emblazoned upon it, presents it on the first day of the sitting to the Lord Chancellor. The titles of the peers are inscribed on this roll in their order of precedence: first the Royal Princes, then the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord Chancellor, the Archbishop of York, the Lord President of the Council and the Lord Privy Seal. After them come the Dukes, the Marquesses, the Earls, headed by the Master of the Horse, the Viscounts, the Bishops and lastly the Barons. The Scottish representative peers number sixteen and the Irish twenty-eight.

One of the most picturesque ceremonies in the House of Lords is that of introducing a new peer to the House. He is accompanied by two sponsors of his own rank,

as is the new Member of the House of Commons; the possibility of some impersonation was in former times the reason for this. He is led into the House by the premier duke, the Duke of Norfolk, in his hereditary position as Earl Marshal of England, and the Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod and the Garter King-at-Arms accompany them. On arrival at the Woolsack, the roll of the peers and the patent of nobility of the newcomer, together with the summons to the House of Lords, are presented to the Lord Chancellor as the representative of the Crown, on bended knee. These documents are read to the House by one of the reading clerks, the oath is taken, the roll signed and then Garter King-at-Arms shows the new peer to his seat among the other peers of the same rank. He and his two supporters seat themselves, only to rise again immediately and bow deeply to the Lord Chancellor, who acknowledges the salute by removing his three-cornered hat. Twice more these courtesies are exchanged. The peer then leaves the House, stopping on the way to be introduced to the Lord Chancellor personally. He has then taken his seat officially and, having removed his robes, is free to return to the sitting in ordinary morning dress if he wishes.

When the new peer to be introduced is the Lord Chancellor, the same procedure takes place with some slight variations. There is no representative of the King present, so the Throne is uncovered for the occasion, and the rails in front of the throne-dais are taken away. The new Lord Chancellor bows to the Throne after his patent has been read and the patent is deposited on the seat of the empty throne, where it remains after the Lord Chancellor has taken his seat on the Woolsack until the conclusion of the day's proceedings. It is then taken away by the Clerk of the House.

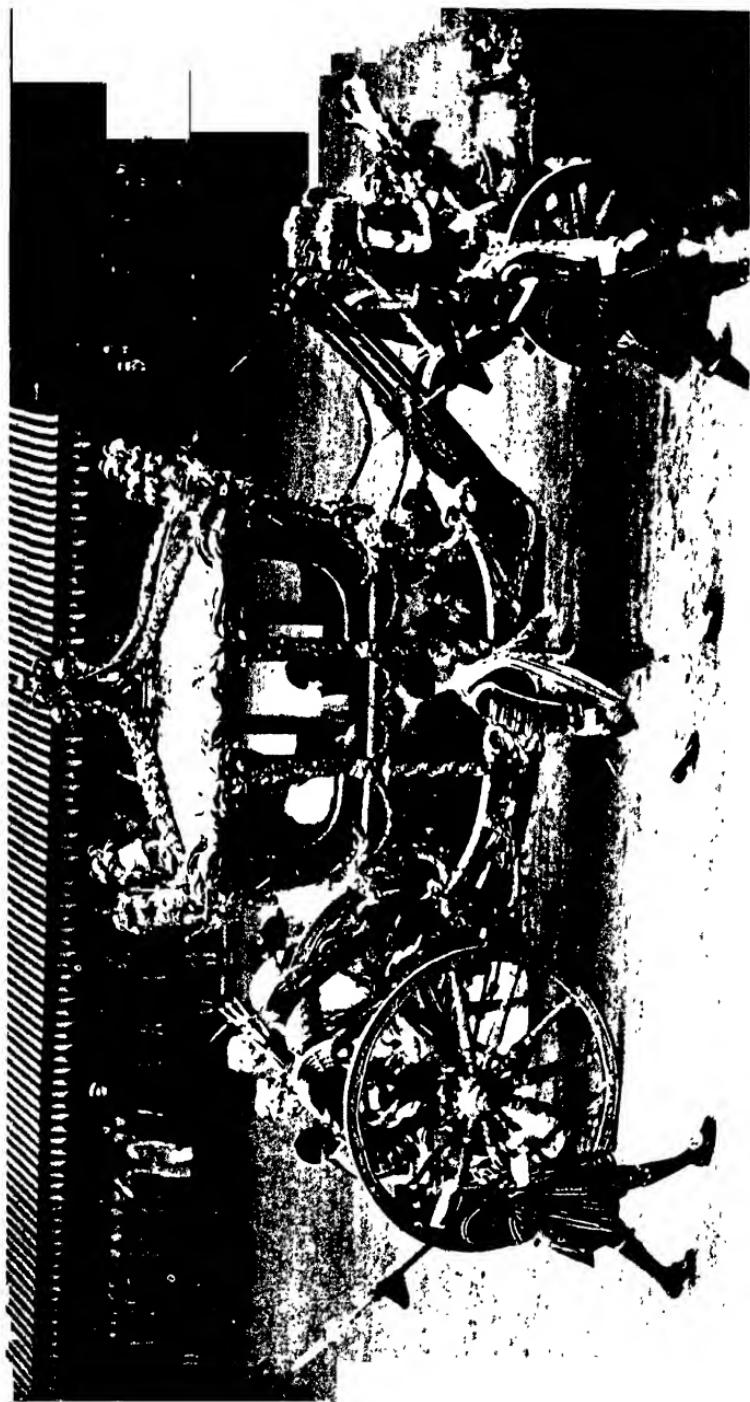
These patents of nobility are the most cherished possessions of the peers of England, for they are considered the only true proof of their owners' rank and are handed down from father to son. When the son of a peer takes

his seat in the House of Lords on his assumption of his father's title, he brings his father's patent of nobility with him and the proof of his own identity. These patents under the Great Seal cannot be altered, and it has occasionally happened that a mistake made by the clerk in writing out the original document has led to a peer assuming a title other than the one granted to him.

One of the most interesting ceremonies in the House of Lords is that of giving the Royal Assent to Bills which have passed through the different readings necessary to make them law. The Royal Commissioners, in the absence of the King, take their seats and send the Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod to the House of Commons to "request" (if the King is present, "command") its Members' presence in the Upper House. The Commons, headed by the Speaker, duly make their appearance at the Bar. Two reading clerks stand one on each side of the table, and the first of them reads out the title of the Bill. The second then bows to the Commissioners, of whom the Lord Chancellor is usually one, half turns towards the Commons and says: "Le Roy le veult!" He then turns back and bows again to the Lords Commissioners.

This is done for each and every Bill and can get a little tedious when some hundreds have to be read and approved. There is no variation except when the title of some private Bill is read, when the Norman-French response becomes: "Soit fait comme il est désiré." The reply: "Le Roy s'avisera," which virtually means that the King refuses to allow the Bill to become law in spite of the fact that it has passed through the two Houses, has not been heard in the House since 1707, when the sudden report of Jacobite unrest in Scotland led Queen Anne to refuse to agree to a Bill introducing Militia to Scotland, which she did on the advice of her ministers.

Twice has an attempt been made to substitute the language of to-day for that of William the Conqueror, once in 1707 and again in 1772; but the idea was ridi-



ARRIVAL OF THE SUNDI COUCH WHICH OWNED BY RONALD GIBBINGS OF PORTSMOUTH



THE LYING-IN-STATE OF KING GEORGE V IN WESTMINSTER HALL, WITH GUARDS OF OFFICERS OF THE HOUSEHOLD TROOPS AND GENTLEMAN-AT-ARMS

culated to such an extent that the sponsors of the proposal very quickly dropped it. Such is the strength of tradition in the Houses of Parliament!

○ Besides being a great legislative assembly, the House of Lords fulfils another and totally different function. ○ It is the highest Court of Appeal in the country and can reverse, if it thinks fit, a decision previously made by any legal court, even the Court of Appeal. The legal decisions of the House of Lords can never be altered, and such decisions are made by the House as a whole and not by any members of it acting in any of their other capacities. The conduct of a case is, however, placed in the hands of the Lords of Appeal in Ordinary and such peers as are holding, or have held, high judicial office, and the decisions are reached by a majority verdict. The proceedings are quite informal, the peers wearing ordinary dress and only the Lord Chancellor, who presides, is in wig and gown. The trial is really a trial by jury, and resembles this much more than the presenting of a case to the highest legal tribunal in England. Quite recently a conviction for murder, which was upheld in the Court of Criminal Appeal, was reversed by the Lords and the defendant set at liberty; and, still more recently, to take an incident at random, a breach of promise case was brought before the Lords and they re-established the verdict of the original court, reversing the decision of the Court of Appeal, a process which happens not infrequently.

This power of the House of Lords applies only to the British Isles. The supreme Court of Law for the Empire is the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, and every member of the British Commonwealth of Nations, whether white, black, brown or yellow, whether belonging to the Christian Faith or no, has the right to appeal to the Council in any case, civil or criminal.

III

ROYAL CEREMONIES

THE position of the King is of such antiquity that almost everything he does is naturally steeped in old ceremony, tradition and custom. The Proclamation (11, 12, 24), Coronation levées, investitures, state functions and court ceremonies afford material for volumes rather than chapters, so that my difficulty here is to know what to leave out rather than what to include.

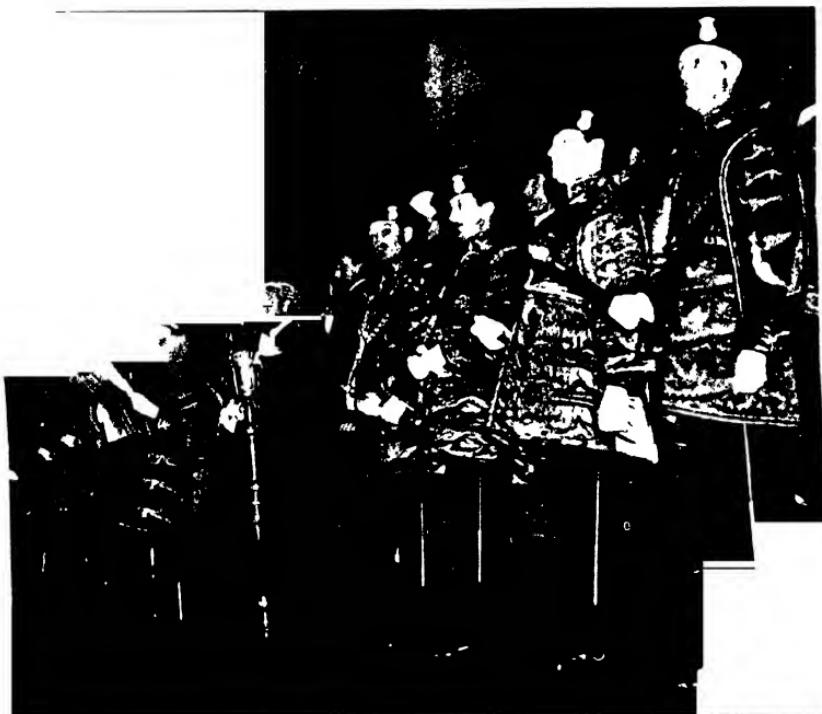
The Coronation of His Majesty King George VI (9) is still fresh in our memories, and so many books, pamphlets and articles were published in the early months of 1937 dealing with the customs attached to this wonderful ceremony that I have decided to pass over many points of ritual which are connected with the Coronation itself. I must, however, record the disappointment occasioned to many by the inaccuracies of some of the writers in our daily press. Surely on such an occasion it is not too much to expect that accounts which are published for the edification of millions of readers, and more especially of their children, should at least be accurate. One regular writer in an evening paper, who claims to be an historian, actually stated that the great Coronation Chair which holds the Stone of Scone was made for Edward the Confessor, an error of nearly three hundred years, and another on the day itself let his imagination run away with him to such an extent that, in describing the moment when the Archbishop of Canterbury placed the crown on His Majesty's head, he gave details of the Imperial Crown and not the Crown of St. Edward, which was actually the one used. The Imperial Crown was, of course, not assumed



THE CROWNING OF KING GEORGE VI BY THE ARCHBISHOP
OF CANTERBURY IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY, MAY 12, 1937



CORONATION COURT OF CLAIMS, THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE PRESIDING



11 CLARENCEUX KING OF ARMS PROCLAIMING THE KING'S
ACCESSION AT THE ROYAL EXCHANGE

by the King until he was leaving the Abbey of Westminster.

Once again a Coronation has passed without the inclusion of the State Banquet in Westminster Hall, and thus once again one of the most spectacular of all ceremonials was omitted—that of the challenge of the King's Champion. This custom has, however, not been definitely abolished so that it is entitled to a place in these pages.

The office of King's Champion has been in existence since the time of William of Normandy. It was held first by the Lords Marmion and is now by their descendants, the family of Dymoke. Dressed in the splendid suit of armour which can be seen in the Guardroom of Windsor Castle, the King's Champion rides into Westminster Hall accompanied by the Earl Marshal of England and the Lord High Constable. He advances towards the western end of the Hall where the newly-crowned Sovereign is sitting at the State Banquet and hurls his steel gauntlet on to the floor with these words: "If any person, of what degree soever, high or low, shall deny or gainsay our Sovereign Lord . . . to be the rightful heir to the Crown of the United Kingdom or that he ought not to enjoy the same, here is his Champion, who saith he lieth sore and is a false traitor, being ready in person to combat with him." When no reply is forthcoming the King drinks his Champion's health in a silver cup and proffers it to him. The Champion takes the cup and, pledging the King in it, retains it as his fee. Finally the Champion has to back his horse the full length of the great Hall and so away, a feat which has occasionally proved too much in the past for many a doughty warrior. As in other years when the banquet was omitted, this year Mr. Dymoke carried the Standard of England at the ceremony in Westminster Abbey.

Almost every gesture and movement in the Coronation ritual has its meaning, and it is to be regretted that many visitors did not obtain the necessary information

which would have led to an understanding of them. Remarks about "play-acting" would not then have been heard from citizens of nations who pride themselves on their modern ways and methods. The anointing of oil, to show the ecclesiastical as well as the kingly power of the Sovereign; the giving of the sword into His Majesty's hand and not the taking of it by him, to show that he does not desire military power; the lifting into the throne to signify the people's will; all these and many other points should have been dealt with in such a way that spectators and listeners could have appreciated their deeper significance.

The Court of Claims (10) which sits before every Coronation under the presidency of the Earl Marshal of England has an immense task to perform, for there are countless services and rights which have belonged by tradition to certain people for hundreds of years, and the court must decide which are to be admitted and which refused. Several special works on this subject were published at the latter end of 1936 and the beginning of 1937, and the student of such matters is recommended to one or other of them for particulars of these rights.

There are many everyday happenings and customs existent in connection with the Crown which have been so long taken for granted that they are almost unknown to the man in the street. For instance, no finger-bowls ever appear on the table when Royalty is being entertained in order to prevent the old Jacobite custom of drinking to the King "over the water." In this connection it is interesting to note that, in virtue of his descent from the Stuart Kings of England, Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria did not fail in 1937 to enter his formal protest against the coronation of His Majesty King George VI. Although no person may enter the King's presence wearing gloves, lest a weapon might be concealed or a poisoned ring worn, the heads of two great families still have the right to wear their hats in the King's presence, a fact that does not seem to be generally known. Both these families are very jealous

of this privilege, and have resisted all attempts on the part of former monarchs to abolish it. Over seven hundred years ago, when the King of France challenged King John to mortal combat, two champions had to be chosen to undergo this ordeal by battle. King John nominated De Courcy, Lord Kingsale, who was one of the biggest men and bravest fighters in England, and when the French champion saw him he declined battle. As a reward, King John gave the Lords of Kingsale the right to remain covered in the King's presence, a privilege still in force to-day. The other family was originally that of a commoner, William Forester, who risked his life to protect King Henry VIII whilst hunting, and William Forester's descendants, who now bear the title of Lord Forester, still preserve the privilege.

A custom, which used to be observed with a great deal more display and ritual on the Continent, has died out there with the passing of so many European thrones; but it is still preserved in England. In memory of the Redeemer's washing of the feet of His disciples on Maundy Thursday before the Last Supper, the ceremony of the Royal Maund has been retained by the English Sovereigns, although the symbolic washing of the feet of the poor was discontinued in 1689. Now, every Maundy Thursday, a special service is held in Westminster Abbey, where the Lord High Almoner represents the King, and the officials taking part wear towels or scarves around their waists to commemorate the ancient custom of the washing of feet. During the course of the service the King's Maundy Money (14, 15) is distributed to as many poor men and as many poor women as there are years in His Majesty's age. The distribution is thirty-five shillings to each woman and forty-five to each man instead of the former gift of clothing with red purses added containing one pound for the women and thirty shillings for the men. This red purse distribution is in lieu of food and used at one time always to be given in gold. Finally, white purses

are distributed containing the King's Maundy Money in the form of specially minted silver pennies, two-penny, three-penny and four-penny pieces, to the amount of as many pennies as there are years in the King's age. These coins, although usually treasured as curios, are actually legal tender. The Yeomen of the Guard attend this ceremony, and the red and white purses with their long leather thongs are carried by one of them on the great Maundy dish which visitors to the Jewel House in the Tower of London will know well by sight.

The term Maundy, according to Spelman, is derived from "maund," a "basket," because, in olden times, on the day before days of fasting, all religious houses brought their broken foodstuffs in maunds, for distribution to the poor. At one time the washing of the feet of beggars and the distribution of money and food to them was a common custom throughout England, and peers and clergy vied with each other to mark the occasion of Lord's Supper and Christ's great "Mandate" of "Love one another."

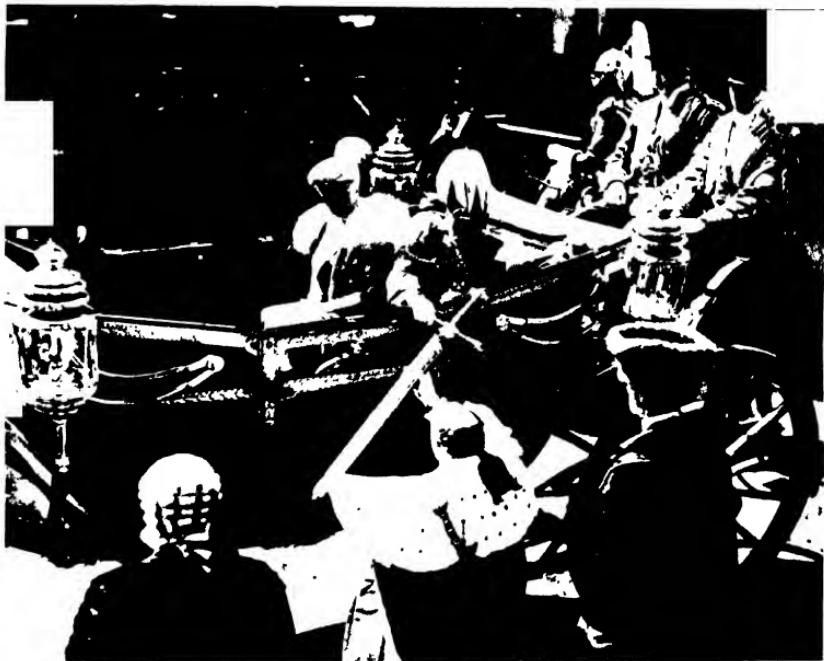
Although the Crown Jewels are the property of the Realm, it is interesting that only the King can give the order for their removal from the Tower. The Keeper of the Jewel House takes orders from nobody except the King and is not bound to obey even the orders of the Governor of the Tower.

A lesser-known Royal ceremony is that commemorating the gifts of the Three Wise Men, or Kings of the New Testament story. On the Feast of Epiphany the Sovereign used to present at the altar gold, frankincense and myrrh, the last Sovereign to do this in person being George III. To-day, at a special service at the Chapel Royal, St. James's Palace, the Lord Chamberlain represents the King and, attended by the Yeomen of the Guard, deposits three purses on the alms dish. These contain thirty pounds for the poor of the parish instead of the former gold-leaf, frankincense and myrrh.

It is mentioned elsewhere in this book that the swan



LANCASTER HERALD PROCLAIMING THE ACCESSION OF
KING GEORGE VI AT CLEARING CROSS



THE LORD MAYOR TENDERS THE CITY SWORD TO KING GEORGE
ON HIS ENTRY TO THE CITY FOR HIS SILVER JUBILEE SERVICE



ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY AND OTHER
DIGNITARIES AFTER THE CEREMONY



15 TWO OF THE OLDEST RECIPIENTS WITH THEIR PURSES

THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE KING'S MAUNDY MONEY, WESTMINSTER ABBEY

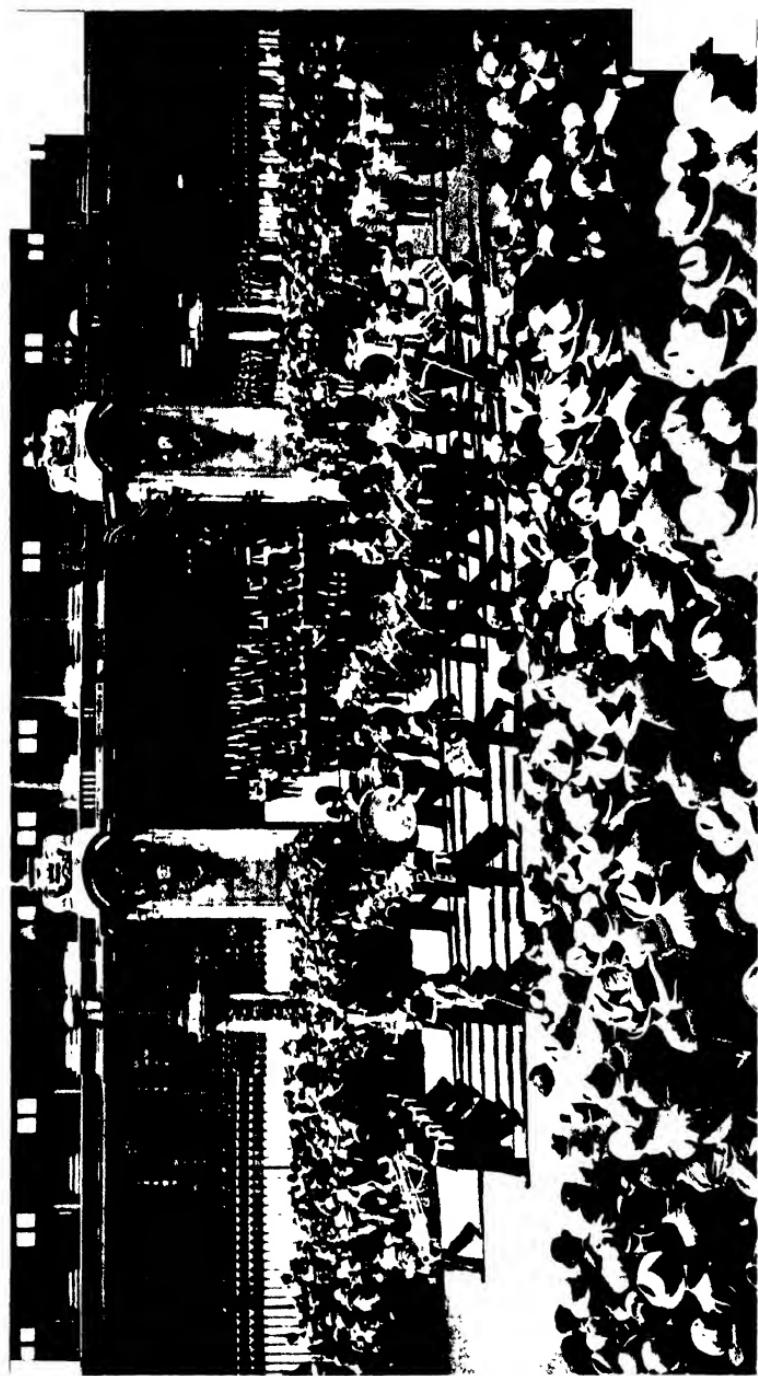
is considered a royal bird, and that all swans belong to the Crown. In addition to these royal birds, deer were at one time royal animals, and the penalties for killing them were very severe. To-day the sturgeon is still a royal fish. Legally, the lucky fisherman who captures one must send it to the Palace for the King's table.

A very ancient relic of feudalism is to be found in the act of homage performed at the Coronation ceremony by the Royal Princes, Peers and Bishops. It is not generally known, however, that when the King visits the Channel Islands, the Seigneurs also perform their homage to "Le Roy, notre Duc." With the standard of William of Normandy unfurled above, each Seigneur kneels before His Majesty and, placing his clasped hands between the King's hands, says: "Je suis votre homme lége, à vous porter foy et hommage contre tous." To the Channel Islanders the King is still the Duke of Normandy, just as to Wales the King's eldest son is the Prince, whereas Chester acknowledges him as its Earl and to Cornishmen he is their Duke.

Formerly, the birth of a member of the Royal Family was attended with the old custom of partaking the "caudle" by all the distinguished visitors, among whom was the Lord Mayor of London and the civic officials of the City who were present to testify to the actuality of the event. These officers also attend at the proclamation of a new Sovereign, and at the death of the old one the Lord Mayor of London is the only Privy Councillor to retain his office on the death of the King. A royal funeral, too, is attended with old custom, although much of it has been allowed to drop into disuse. The Lying-in-State (8) was once supposed to afford the citizens the opportunity of proving to their satisfaction that the King had died for the reasons given and not by any act of foul play; but to-day it is an opportunity to pay a last act of respect to the Monarch. The flag on the Round Tower of Windsor Castle is lowered to half-mast only on the death of the Sovereign, and

the Sebastopol Bell at Windsor and Great Tom at St. Paul's Cathedral are tolled, the first only when the King is dead, the second for one hour on the death of any member of the Royal Family, and for two hours on the death of the King.



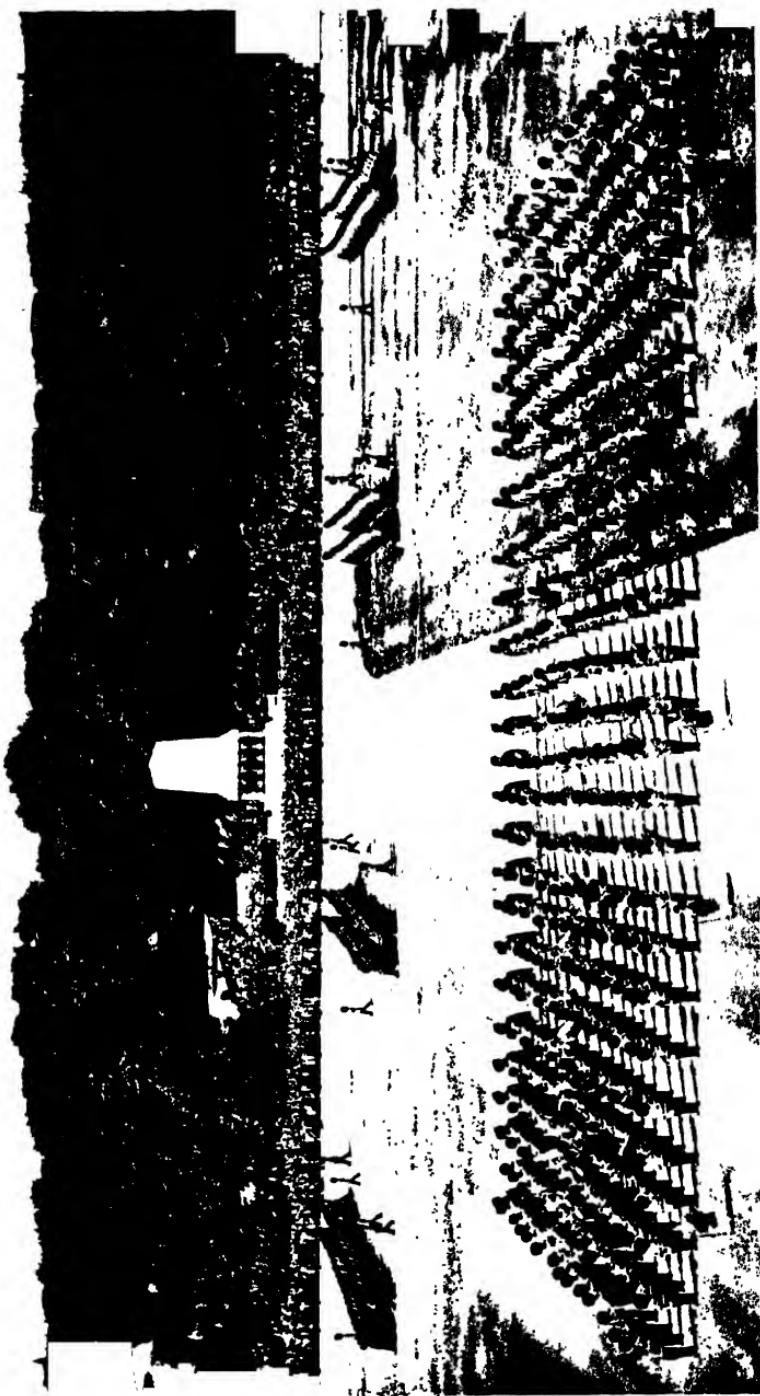


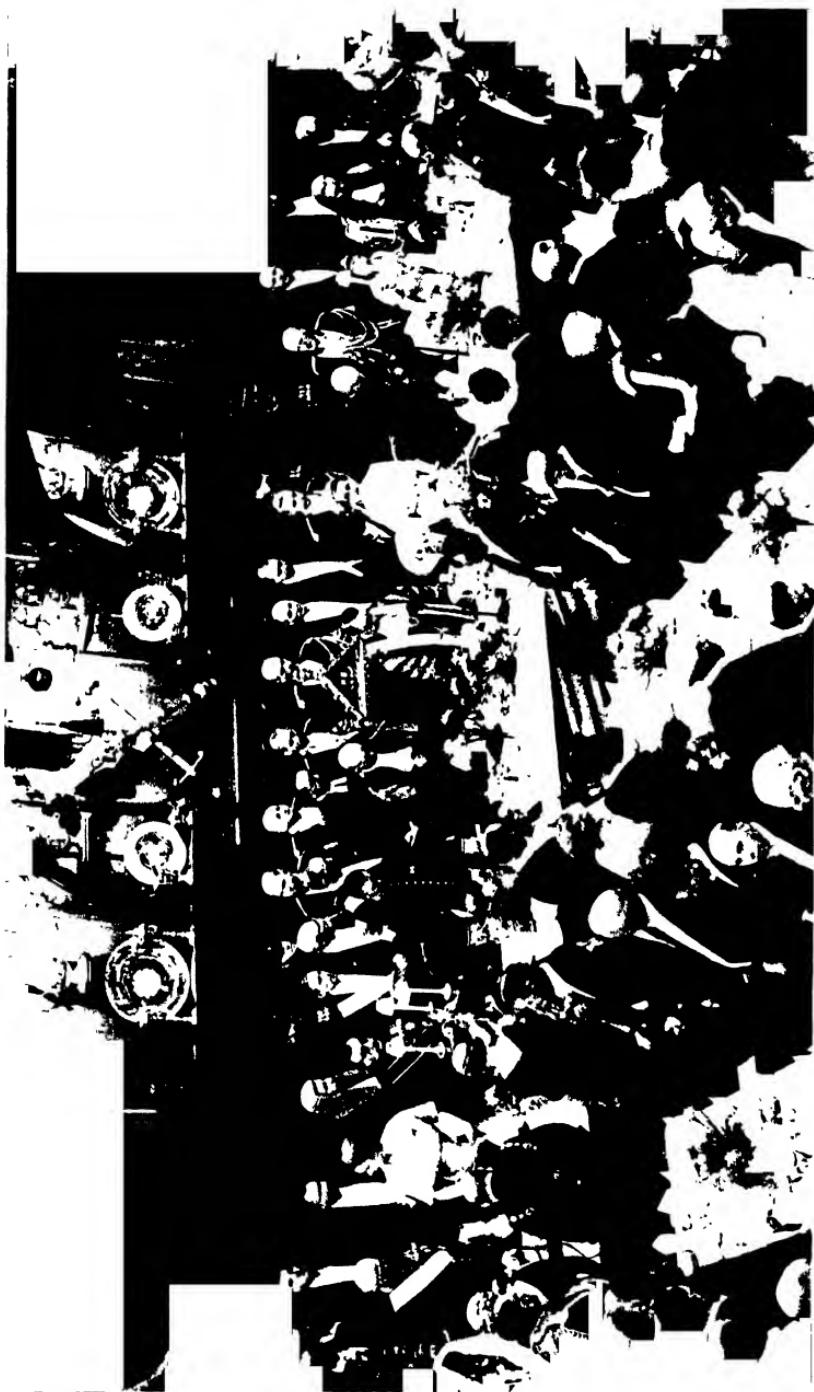
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THE VICTORY OF THE HORSES IN THE RACE.

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IV

THE CITY OF LONDON

LONDON, in spite of the modern innovations which only too often in other parts of England have caused the decay and disappearance of interesting customs, has still preserved its ceremonies and traditions to a greater extent than any other city in England. Rebuilding schemes, and the natural replacement of old buildings with structures more suited to the needs of the present day, have caused the disappearance of many sites that antiquaries would like to have seen preserved; but, in spite of this, the store of old customs is vast indeed. It would be impossible to touch even the fringe of the ritual surrounding the famous square mile of the City in the scope of one chapter. I have therefore endeavoured to divide my subject matter under different headings, and the reader may thus find that some of the customs rightfully belonging to London are described in other chapters dealing with special branches of the community, such as the Livery Companies, or the legal profession.

The City, as the oldest part of the greatest metropolis in the world, has so much to offer in the form of mayoral customs, courts, administration and old survivals that it has a just claim to be considered first. Whether the old capital city of Winchester has an older charter is still a matter for discussion; but in point of importance and interest London must leave the cathedral city far behind. London's charter, which dates from William of Normandy, is still to be seen; but this charter distinctly "confirms the ancient rights of the city of London," which therefore it must have enjoyed under

the Anglo-Saxon kings of England. This is further proved by the beautiful crystal-set mace of the Corporation, which authorities very definitely pronounce to be Saxon work.

The Lord Mayor of London, the Chief Magistrate of the City, is its paramount head. The earliest mention of a Mayor, as such, occurs in a writ of the reign of Henry II. It is generally assumed, however, that a change in the title of the Chief Magistrate of the City was made at the accession of Richard Cœur de Lion in 1189. There is a record in the city archives which reads: "In the same year (1 Richard I), Henry Fitz Eylwin, of Londonstane, was made Mayor of London, and was the first Mayor of the City, and continued to be such Mayor to the end of his life."

The title "Lord Mayor" was never officially conferred, but from 1546 onwards, in which year Sir Martin Bowes held the office, the full title appeared regularly on all documents. The election of the Lord Mayor (21) was granted to the citizens as a privilege by King John in 1215, the year of *Magna Charta*, and the date was originally the feast of St. Simon and St. Jude (October 28th). From 1346 to 1546 this date was changed to October 13th, the Feast of the Translation of Edward the Confessor, but in 1546 it was again altered, this time to Michaelmas Day, September 29th, and this is the date used to-day. Up to 1376 the Mayor was elected by the Aldermen and Sheriffs conjointly with a deputation from the various Wards. In that year it was placed in the hands of selected representatives of the City Guilds, and the right continued to be a source of contention until 1715, when the Livery Companies were granted the privilege by Act of Parliament. Every member of the 77 Livery Companies now has a vote in the election which he uses in the Guildhall on September 29th of each year.

The candidates are chosen from a very select company, that is, Aldermen who have also served terms of office as Sheriffs. The old Ceremonial Book reads as follows:

"The citizens have ever been jealous of the rights, privileges and powers with which the Chief Magistrate is invested, affecting, as they do, their property, liberty and safety, that this office has been carefully restricted to the man of the public choice, that no one can occupy the civic chair until he has been three times subjected to popular election; first, by the householders of the Ward he is elected to represent as Alderman, next by the Liverymen as Sheriff, and thirdly he is now eligible to be Lord Mayor, and has been nominated by the Liverymen, elected by the Aldermen and approved by the Crown, subject, nevertheless, to the disqualification of bankruptcy or insolvency or otherwise. Thus secured from debasement, thus dignified with power, thus privileged and thus exalted is the chief magistrate of this great City by the choice of the people and the Sovereign's approval, and to this dignified position the son of the humblest citizen may aspire."

On the day of election, King Street, leading to the Guildhall, is barred to traffic by a high wooden fence (20). This fence contains a number of doors and over each door are written the names of some of the Livery Companies. Behind the doors stand the Beadles of the respective Companies resplendent in their uniforms and three-cornered hats, ready to check and identify every member of their Liveries as he seeks admission to the election. They must see to it that not one single unauthorized person obtains access to the Guildhall during the ceremonial. The precept sent by the Lord Mayor is addressed to the Masters and Wardens of the various Liveries to summon their members to Guildhall, thence to go to the parish church of St. Lawrence Jewry to take part in Divine Service, which takes the form of the Communion Service, hear a special sermon preached and then return to the Guildhall for the election of the Lord Mayor for the coming year. The Swordbearer's office is responsible for the sending of a similar invitation or summons to the Aldermen, Sheriffs and High Officers.

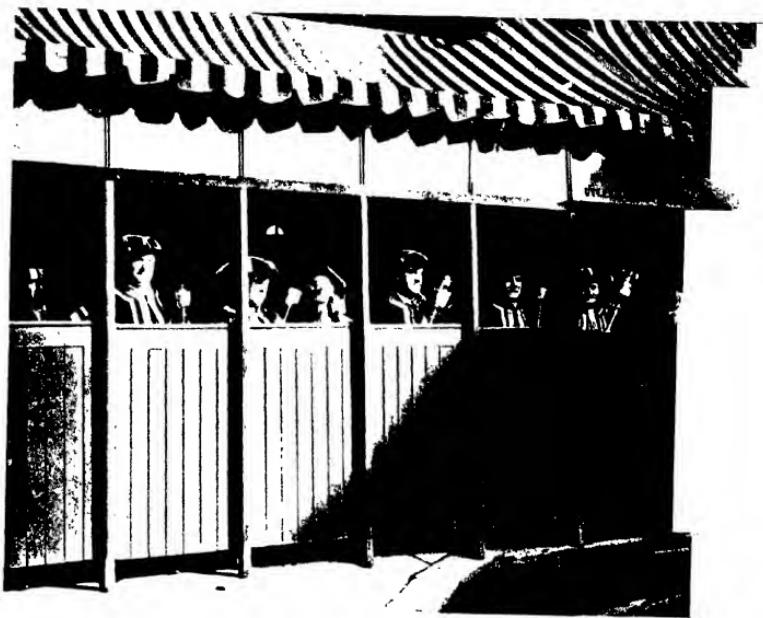
The Lord Mayor and Sheriffs go from the Mansion House in full state in their gowns and chains of

office (21), and are received by the Aldermen at the Guildhall. Each of them is presented with a nosegay of flowers on arrival by the hallkeeper. On the raised Husting platform which, for the occasion, is strewn with sweet-smelling herbs, seats are taken and the Common Crier commands silence, directs all persons to be uncovered, and those who are not Liverymen to depart the Hall on pain of committal to the Tower of London. He then opens the Common Hall with the following proclamation:

“Oyez, Oyez, Oyez! You good men of the Livery of the several Companies of the City, summoned to appear here this day for the election of a fit and able person to be Lord Mayor of this City, for the year ensuing, draw near and give your attendance. God save the King!”

The Recorder or the Common Serjeant then rises, bows to the Lord Mayor and advances to the front of the platform. He bows to the Livery and informs them of the reason of the meeting. He then states that, in order that the election may be free and unfettered, the Lord Mayor and the Aldermen who have passed the chair, will retire. This they do, and the election proper commences. The Sheriffs advance to the front of the platform and the Common Serjeant reads a list of the names of those eligible. The Livery are to elect two for the final verdict of the Court of Aldermen. Each name is then read out separately, and at the same time a board bearing the name is held up for the Livery to see. The Common Crier calls out: “So many of you as will have N. Esq., Alderman and Draper (or Vintner, Fishmonger or whatever trade the candidate belongs to) to be Lord Mayor of this City for the year ensuing, hold up your hands.”

After this has been done for each candidate, the Sheriffs decide upon whom the choice has fallen. The Common Serjeant announces the two names to the Livery who can either accept the verdict or demand a poll if they do not agree with the Sheriffs. The two



20. BEADLES WAITING AT THE WICKETS TO RECEIVE THE LIVERY



21. THE LORD MAYOR ELECT WALKING IN PROCESSION TO THE GUILDFHALL.

THE ELECTION OF THE LORD MAYOR OF LONDON



22. HANDING OVER THE MACE TO THE NEW LORD MAYOR
AT THE GUILDHALL



THE NEW LORD MAYOR WATCHES THE START OF HIS
SHOW FROM THE GUILDHALL



THE LORD MAYOR OF LONDON ADMITS THE KING'S HERALD TO THE CITY AT TEMPLE BAR FOR THE PROCLAMATION



THE LORD MAYOR OF LONDON AND THE HERALDS
TOASTING KING GEORGE VI AFTER HIS PROCLAMATION



successful candidates are then conducted by the Sheriffs, the Common Serjeant and the other officers to the Aldermen's Court with which the final decision rests. On arriving, the Sheriffs and the Common Serjeant bow three times to the Court; first as they enter, then in the centre of the court and lastly as they reach the table. The Lord Mayor acknowledges each salute and removes his hat after the third. Thirteen Aldermen in all must be present in this Court. The City sword is laid in a bed of roses to show that the proceedings are secret. This very interesting observance has the same origin as the expression "sub rosa," and the ornamentation of the roofs of the confessional boxes with roses in some Roman Catholic Churches. Banqueting halls, notably that of the beautiful Haddon Hall, are sometimes ornamented in the same manner. According to Greek mythology Cupid gave a rose to Harpocrates, the god of Silence, as a bribe not to betray the amours of Venus, and this flower has been the emblem of silence ever since.

The Recorder, the Town Clerk and the Common Serjeant now retire to the far end of the room and the Court puts a series of whispered questions to each candidate. Each Alderman, in turn, then rises and, proceeding to the end of the room, records his vote with the Town Clerk, the other two officials watching to see that no mistake is made in the counting. When all have voted, the Recorder, the Common Serjeant and the Town Clerk approach the Lord Mayor and ask for his vote, which all three officials must hear. The Recorder then announces the result of the voting. After the Lord Mayor-Elect has thanked the Court and received the congratulations of the Aldermen, they all return to the great Hall. The assembled Liverymen can see at once the result of the election as the Lord Mayor-Elect walks on the left hand of the outgoing Lord Mayor. The Recorder informs the Livery of the result of the Election.

After expressing his assent to take office, the Lord

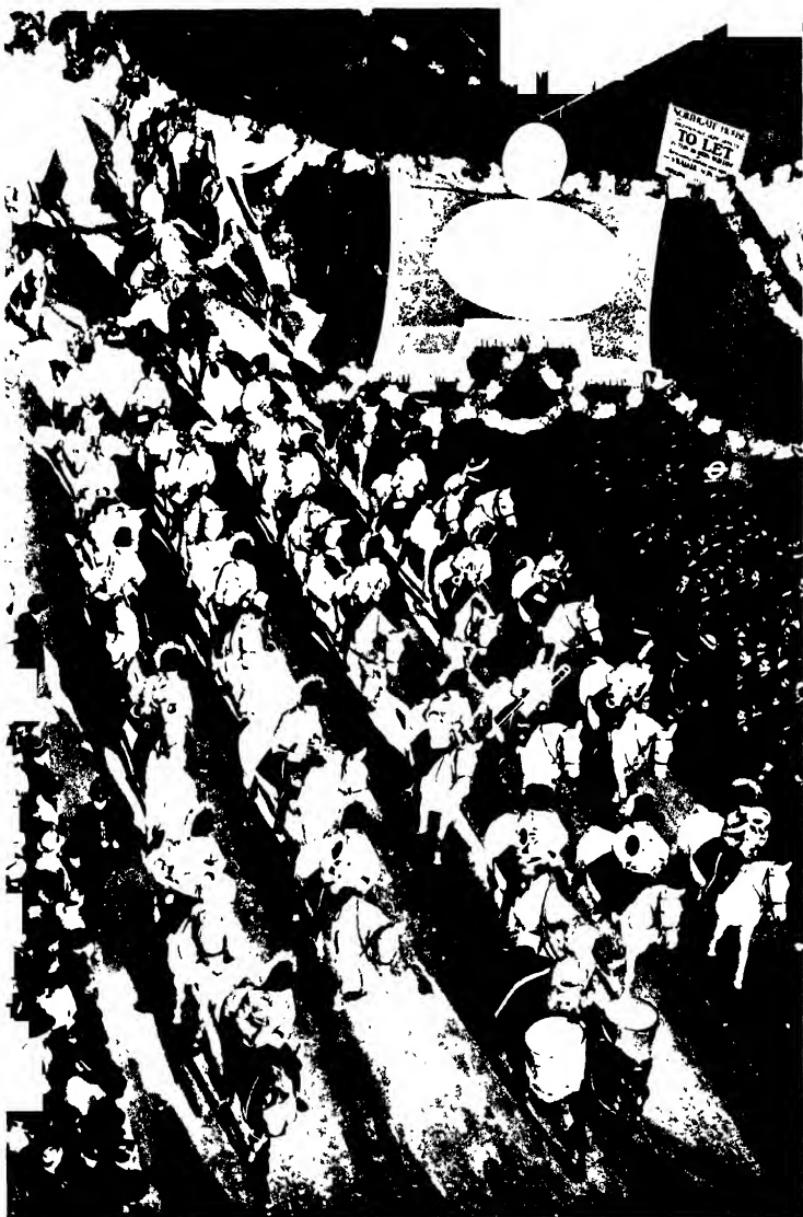
Mayor-Elect is invested with the chain he wore during his shrievalty and then addresses the Common Hall. Speeches of thanks to the outgoing Lord Mayor for all his services during the past year are made. The Common Crier then dissolves the Common Hall with these words : "Oyez, Oyez, Oyez! You good men of the Livery of the several Companies of this City summoned to appear here this day for the election of a Lord Mayor of this City for the year ensuing, may depart hence at this time, and give your attendance here again upon a new summons. God save the King."

The Lord Mayor-Elect has no power to take part in any matters connected with his office until he has made his declaration before the Judges on November 9th. The next ceremonial, and one of the most interesting of all, is the "Swearing in" of the new Lord Mayor, which has a very deep significance, as he undertakes among other things to do all in his power to uphold the rights, privileges and traditions of the City. A glance through any book of English history will serve to show the enormous part played by the City in the making of the country and Empire. To take but one example: In 1807 the struggle for freedom of speech and the freedom of the Press had reached its climax. The House of Commons committed Sir Francis Burdett to the Tower because he questioned the right of the House to commit a man to prison for proposing to discuss Parliamentary proceedings in a Debating Society. The Livery were summoned to Common Hall to discuss "the alarming assumption of privilege, by the Honourable the House of Commons, of arresting and imprisoning, during pleasure, the people of England, for offences cognizable in the usual Courts of Law." Sir Francis was thanked for having upheld the right of freedom of speech. The Common Council and the Common Hall presented strongly worded addresses, keeping up the pressure until finally Lord Grey's Reform Bill passed into law.

The "Swearing In" ceremony takes place on the day



THE LORD MAYOR'S COACH IN THE PROCESSION ON
NOVEMBER 9TH



ROYAL SCOTS GREYS AT THE
LORD MAYOR'S SHOW

previous to Lord Mayor's Day. The Lord Mayor, attended by the Aldermen, the Sheriffs, the Sword-bearer, Common Crier, his Chaplain and the Livery to which he belongs proceed in state from the Mansion House to the Guildhall. Later the Lord Mayor-Elect, attended by his own Livery, make the same journey. On arrival he is introduced to the Court of Aldermen by two Aldermen who have passed the chair. The Husting platform has been arranged meanwhile, and the Liveries of the Lord Mayor and the Lord Mayor-Elect take their places on each side of the Mayoral chair. A special Court of Aldermen is held at which the retiring Lord Mayor takes leave of the Court. Then he, the Lord Mayor-Elect, the Sheriffs, Aldermen and Officers come into the Hall and take their places on the platform. The Common Crier walks to the table, makes three bows, places his mace on the floor and stands in front of the table. The Town Clerk now bows and administers the Declaration to the Lord Mayor-Elect, standing on the opposite side of the table. The latter makes and signs the Declaration, after which the retiring Lord Mayor surrenders his seat to the new Lord Mayor and takes his seat elsewhere.

The old form of the oath was as follows:

“Ye shall swaere that ye shall well and lawfully serve the Queen's Maiesty in the office of Maioralty in the Citty of London; and the same Citty ye shall surely and safely keepe, to the behoofe of her highnes, her heires, and lawfull successors; and the right of the Queen, that to the crowne appertayneth, in the same Citty of London lawfully ye shall keepe. Ye shall not consent to the decrease ne concealement of the rights ne of the franchises of the Queen; and where soever ye shall knowe the rights of the Queen or of the crowne (be it in lands or in rents, franchises or sutes) concealed or withdrawn, to your power ye shall doe to repeale it: and if ye may not, ye shall say it to the Queen, or to them of her counsell that ye wete will say it to the Queen. Also lawfully and rightfully ye shall entreat the people of your Bailliewick; and right shall ye doe to every one, as well to strangers as others, to poore as to riche, in

that that belongeth you to doe; and that for highnes ne for riches, for gyfte ne for behest, for favour ne for hate, wrong shall ye doe to no man; ne nothing shall ye take by the which the Queen should leese or right be disturbed or letted. And good assize shall ye set upon bread, wyne, ale, fysh, flesh, corne, and all other victualls. Weights and measures in the same Citty ye shall doe to be kept, and due execution doe upon the defaults that thereof shall be founde, according to all the statuts thereof made, not repealed. And in all other things that to a mayor of the City of London belongeth to doe, well and lawfully ye shall doe and behave you.

As God you Helpē."

After the subscription of the oath, the Chamberlain bows three times, walks to the table and presents the diamond sceptre to the retiring Mayor. He hands it to the new Lord Mayor who places it on the table. The Chamberlain bows again three times and retires. In the same manner he advances twice more and hands over first the Seal of the office of Mayoralty and then the Purse. Next the Swordbearer advances with the customary three bows and hands over the sword which is also placed on the table and the Common Crier does the same with the Mace. The Chamberlain's Chief Clerk now comes to the table with a velvet cushion and receives from the new Lord Mayor the Sceptre, the Seal and the Purse with which he retires (22). The Swordbearer and the Common Crier then also advance and receive at the hands of the new Lord Mayor the Sword and the Mace respectively. After the Aldermen and Sheriffs have congratulated the Lord Mayor on his election, the City Remembrancer presents to him a deputation for the City Gauger which is duly signed, as is the indenture for the City Plate which is presented by the Comptroller. Finally the retiring Lord Mayor delivers the key of the City Seal and the Hospital Seal to the new Lord Mayor. This ends the ceremony, but the Lord Mayor still has one more duty to perform before he can assume full control of the City. He must receive the Royal assent to his election, and for this

purpose he goes to Westminster to the House of Lords so that the Lord Chancellor, as the representative of the Crown, can invest him with full power of jurisdiction over the City.

The Recorder introduces the Lord Mayor-Elect to the Lord Chancellor, speaks of his career and his character, and testifies that he is a fit and proper person to hold his high office. The Lord Chancellor, in reply, states that His Majesty is well aware of the great gifts of the Lord Mayor-Elect and is graciously pleased to ratify the choice of the Liverymen of the City of London. A loving-cup of sack is presented to the Lord Chancellor, who drinks to the health of the Lord Mayor and then passes it to the assembled officials. The Lord Mayor then returns to the City as the head of the Corporation, and, during his term of office, holds equal rank with an Earl and is also a Privy Councillor. He is always the first to be consulted on the choice of a Sovereign and he is the only Privy Councillor, as I mentioned in my chapter on Royal Ceremonies, who does not automatically lose this rank on the death of the King.

The Lord Mayor is accompanied to Westminster by the City Beadles, officials who date back to the thirteenth century, when one "Bedel" was appointed to each ward of the City. His duty was to ensure the peace and safety of those who lived in his ward, appointing also the watchmen and seeing that there was a guard over the gates. He was thus the law-officer for his own particular part of the City; but to-day he has none of these tasks to perform. The Beadle takes charge of the City mace of his ward, and these maces are among the greatest treasures of the Corporation. They are mostly sixteenth-century work of silver-gilt and silver, and each mace has the model of some building in the ward worked into it.

The Beadles are to-day the officials of the electoral courts of the City. These are called "Hustings," and are without doubt among the oldest courts in the country, for the word comes from the Danish "Hus,"

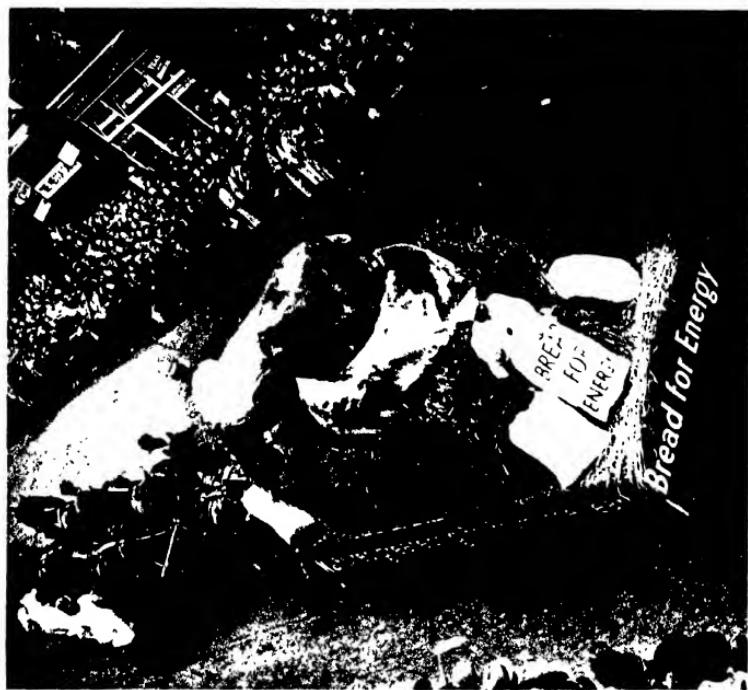
meaning House or Home, and "Thing," a Parliament or law-giving body. Thus the Hustings are the courts or Parliaments that decide home affairs. This offers definite proof that these courts must have been founded as far back as the time of the Viking invasions of England in the eighth and ninth centuries. Their counterpart is to be found in the Isle of Man, where the Thingwald, to which reference was made in the chapter dealing with Parliamentary customs, is annually held. A full account of it is given later in this book.

The proceedings in the Hustings are opened with a very ancient proclamation, the wording of which is at least seven hundred years old. It reads: "Oyez, Oyez, Oyez! All manner of persons who have been five times by virtue of any exigeant directed to the Sheriffs of London and have not surrendered their bodies to the said Sheriff, this Court doth adjudge the men to be outlawed and the women to be waived."

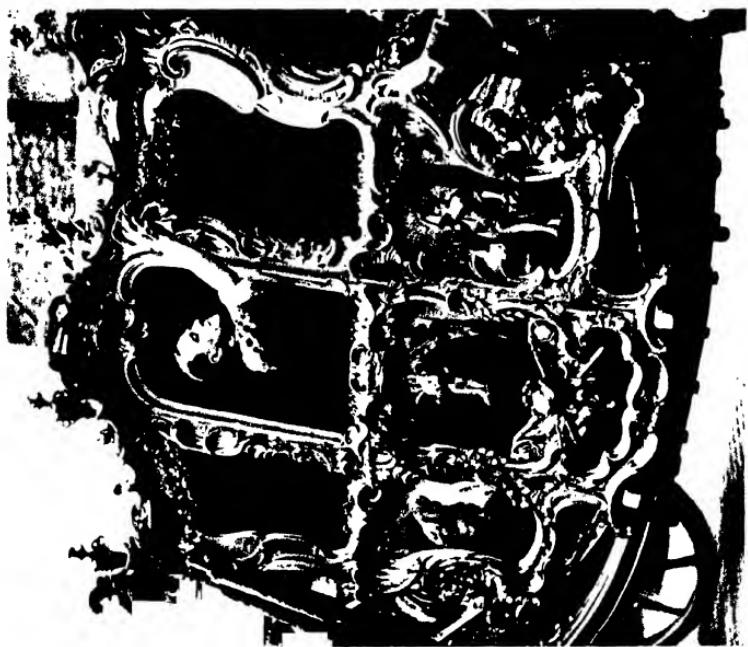
When these courts sit, the dais, on which the judicial seats are placed, is strewn with aromatic herbs and wild flowers, a custom referred to in the chapter dealing with the courts of law. The reason is the same in both cases—to prevent the judges from contracting disease from the prisoners.

The Corporation of London possesses many old rights and privileges, granted to it in the course of the centuries of its history, and the Lord Mayor, on taking over his duties, swears to preserve these to the best of his ability. One of them is that, as is the case in no other English city, the City Sword and the ward maces are carried upright in state processions and not over the shoulder, or "sloped," as is the custom elsewhere. This privilege was granted to the city in 1354.

In 1428, when Henry VI was on the throne, the famous Sir Richard Whittington was Lord Mayor of London, and the administrators of the kingdom, including in their numbers the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London, who ruled the country whilst the King was still a child, granted to the Lord

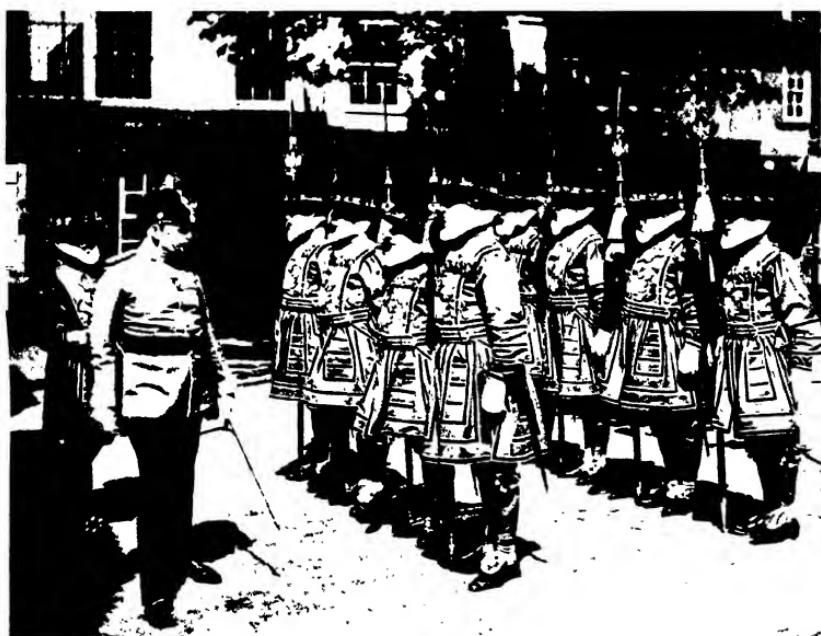


2. VISIONBOARD CARRIED WITH LORD MAYOR'S SHOW





30. THE NIGHTLY GUARD, THE DETACHMENT OF GUARDS
ENTERING THE BANK OF ENGLAND



CHURCH PARADE OF THE YEOMEN OF THE GUARD,
TOWER OF LONDON

Mayor of London, and to other officials of the City, the right of receiving annually a certain number of deer from the royal forests. The old warrant is preserved in the British Museum and bears the signatures and seals of the two Bishops, as well as those of several members of the Privy Council of 1428. Twice a year the venison warrants are still issued, once for bucks and once for does, the Lord Mayor receiving six, the Sheriffs three, the Town Clerk one and so on. This was probably some return for the huge sums of money which Sir Richard Whittington had lent to the Crown for the purpose of carrying on the war. One of these loans was cancelled in dramatic fashion by the Lord Mayor on the King's victorious return from France. Sir Richard Whittington rode out to meet Henry V at the head of a brilliant cavalcade of the City officials, and on the approach of the King tore up the bill he held for a sum of no less than £30,000.

The Lord Mayor in his position as Chief Magistrate is the absolute master of the City, and has his own police force to keep law and order. From time immemorial the heralds of the King or Queen have had to ask his permission, on reaching the City boundaries, for the Sovereign to enter the City of London. This permission is always granted at once, and the Lord Mayor surrenders his authority over the Square Mile for the time of the King's sojourn in it. He does this by presenting the pearl-handled City sword to His Majesty at Temple Bar, but the red cord or chain drawn across the road still shows that the Corporation is determined to insist on its rights and privileges.

The Lord Mayor is also master of London's fortress, the Tower, and has the power to commit persons to it for certain offences. He is the only person, with the exception of the King, who is informed every night of the Tower password so that he can exert his authority over it after dark. No troops may cross the City boundaries without first receiving permission from the Lord Mayor, and only certain regiments (a list of which is

given in the chapter dealing with the customs of the Army), which are descended from the trained bands of the City, can march through with bayonets fixed and Colours flying. Perhaps, however, the statement that the Lord Mayor is absolute master of the City needs slight modification, for, strangely enough, there are places within the City limits which do not acknowledge his authority and which occasionally bar their gates on his approach. One of these is the Temple. When the bounds of the City are beaten in that district, entrance to the Temple gardens can only be gained after permission has been granted by the Benchers. Once, in 1669, Sir William Turner, the Lord Mayor, on being invited to dinner in the Temple, announced his intention of arriving in state with the City sword and maces. The Benchers protested and, when he persisted, such a serious riot ensued that the City train-bands had to be called out to restore order, and the Lord Mayor was forced to return to the Mansion House without his dinner. Some years later, however, he "got his own back" for, when a fire broke out in the Temple, he refused to allow the passage of the City Fire Brigade to the scene of the conflagration.

Another part of London over which the Lord Mayor has no jurisdiction is Ely Place, off Holborn. This was originally part of the garden of the London palace of the Bishop of Ely and, as such, was a Liberty and a Sanctuary, outside the control of anyone except the episcopal authorities. So it has remained to this day, completely cut off at night by its locked gates and protected, not by the police, but by its own appointed watchman (33), who goes his rounds calling the hours and the state of the weather as was done everywhere in London hundreds of years ago. Ely Place is absolutely unique in this respect.

Quite recently the question of ringing the curfew was the subject of some correspondence in the daily press. This practice, which was imposed by William of Normandy as a curb on the populace as well as a safe-



BEADLE OF ELY PLACE, HOLBORN, CALLING THE HOURS



34 STANDING A CHOIR BOY OF ST. CLEMENT DANES ON HIS HEAD IN THE TEMPLE GARDENS



35 ON LONDON BRIDGE, IN HEAVY RAIN
CEREMONIALS OF "BEATING THE BOUNDS" IN LONDON

guard, is still rung in four different places in London, namely the Tower of London, the Charterhouse, Gray's Inn and Lincoln's Inn, and also in many other places outside the metropolis. Of these the most famous is Chertsey in Surrey, wherein Blanche Heriot clung to the clapper of the bell and was dashed against its sides in order to prevent it from ringing, thus saving the life of her lover, who was sentenced to die on the first note of the curfew. In many places where the curfew is supposed to ring, I have found that what is commonly thought to be this is no more than a survival of the Angelus.

Before leaving the question of ceremonies and customs connected with the office of Lord Mayor of the City, something must be said of Lord Mayor's Day and the Lord Mayor's Banquet.

The entire arrangements for the Lord Mayor's Show (27 ff) are in the hands of the City Remembrancer and a body of sixteen who are known as the "Lord Mayor and Sheriff's Committee." They also act as Stewards at the Banquet (19). The entire cost of the show and the Banquet is divided equally between the Lord Mayor on the one hand and the Sheriffs on the other. The theme of the pageant always has some bearing on the career or Company of the Lord Mayor, and on many occasions the initial idea comes from him. It is always a brave show, even if traffic is held up for hours because of it, and it would be a pity if it were abolished. The City is famous for the magnificence of its entertainments, and everyone should take the opportunity of paying at least one visit to the Square Mile on an occasion such as Lord Mayor's Day. In the evening, the Banquet (19) is a pageant without rival in the world. In the stately old Hall beneath the watchful eyes of Gog and Magog, the thousands, sometimes, of guests, in brilliant uniforms and dresses, seem like some vision of fairyland. The Guest of Honour is usually the Prime Minister of the day, but by tradition the King attends the first Lord Mayor's Banquet after his accession.

After the banquet the loving-cup passes round and certain customary toasts are drunk. The first after the Loyal Toasts is that of "His Majesty's Ministers." In reply, the Prime Minister is always expected to say something of the past policy of the Government and to give a brief indication of that to be followed in the future, especially with regard to Foreign Affairs and any matters that directly concern the City. This is one of the most important pronouncements made by him during the year. It is always eagerly awaited, and nowadays is usually transmitted by wireless to every corner of the Empire. In the succeeding toasts the Fighting Forces, the Judges and the Bar, Foreign Ministers and the officials of the City are all remembered.

To return to the streets and squares of London, a curious survival is to be found in a street near the Temple. There a light is kept burning in the passage of a certain house, and the people living in the street have free access to that passage during the night if they like to exert that right. The light is maintained by the Westminster Council, and a watchman has the task of lighting it every dusk and extinguishing it every dawn. This arose from the fact that the passage at one time contained the only water supply in the district. Consequently the people living in that particular street were granted free access to it during the hours of the night in order to fetch water.

London has changed so considerably in the course of the last century that often only by the names of the streets can we discover the customs and habits of those who inhabited them. These names in themselves are often well worth studying. Cheapside, for instance, tells its own story of London's market area, whilst Bread Street and Milk Street, Wood Street and Cannon Street (i.e. Candle Street), and many another, speak of the vendors of those commodities who once flourished there. The Great Fire of 1666 destroyed much, but more has been destroyed since in the name of progress. Still, as long as the Lord Mayor swears at his election

to maintain the rights and privileges of the City of London—so long the old ceremonies I have described continue—and they will be as alive for we who understand them as they were at their inception hundreds of years ago.

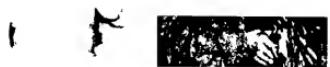
V

THE CITY LIVERY COMPANIES

OF all the historic institutions of England the City Guilds, or Livery Companies of London, must surely take pride of place. These Livery Companies originally wore special gowns according to the Guild to which they belonged, and at that time the word "Livery" meant something that was delivered. To-day the servant's uniform is termed a livery because the master "delivers" the suit to the servant.

English trade and commerce, business and craftsmanship, owe the City Companies a huge debt, for all through the ages they have fostered trade, encouraged industry with advice and finance, and seen to it that English goods are all they purport to be and not some ingenious copy of the real article. In the Middle Ages they had the power to enter the shop of any tradesman who sold articles appertaining to their Guild, and could seize goods of inferior quality or craftsmanship. Some of them have been in existence for over eight centuries, and most of them have preserved intact their ancient customs and ceremonies.

The Guilds were very wealthy, and the Kings of England were continually laying them under contribution for the costs of wars and campaigns. Sometimes at a Lord Mayor's show or some great civic function, we can gain an impression of the splendid way in which these powerful bodies feted the great figures of history. The banquets held by them are still attended with all the ancient rites and traditions (36), so that the guest in one or other of their great Halls can get a wonderful impression of their ancient dignity.



36 BRINGING IN THE BOAR'S HEAD AT THE ANNUAL BANQUET,
CUTLERS' HALL, CITY OF LONDON



37 THE CHILE ALE CONNER TASTES THE LAST BREW AT THE
RED LION BREWERY, CITY OF LONDON



PICKING UP SIXPENCES FROM A TOMBSTONE IN THE CHURCH
YARD OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW THE GREAT, SMITHFIELD



39 SWEEPING THE STREETS BEFORE THE VINTNERS' COMPANY
PROCESSION TO ST. JAMES', GARLICKHYTHE

The Weavers claim to be the oldest Company, for they were in existence in the reign of Henry I and were granted a charter by Henry II in 1184. Many, such as the Vintners and the Fishmongers, date their charters from Edward III, who was a great supporter of the Guilds, whilst the Needlemakers, although one of the youngest, are unique in that their charter was given to them by the Lord Protector, Oliver Cromwell.

There are not many of the Livery Companies to-day carrying out the tasks and duties for which they were originally brought into existence; but one of them still serves the people of London to a very great extent, and of this service the people are hardly aware. The Fishmongers' Company appoint "fishmeters," and these inspectors, as we should call them to-day, attend Billingsgate Market and examine all the "harvest of the sea." They have the power to seize any unsound fish, and the Company pays for their work as well as for the removal of the condemned food. The Fishmongers also prosecute any seller of fish which is not in season. Most of the Companies to-day are better known for the great charitable work they do. In fact, some of them now do no more than administer the charitable funds which have been bequeathed to them for this purpose. They support and encourage schools, and some of the most famous of the Public Schools are "children" of the Livery Companies of London. St. Paul's, for example, is closely connected with the Mercers' Company, and Oundle owes its existence to the Grocers'.

All the Companies, as I have said, keep up their old customs, and several volumes would be necessary to give a complete account of those ceremonies that are a part of their daily life. One custom is common to all. At the banquets, a loving-cup goes round the board and, in memory of the treacherous murder of King Edward the Martyr, who was stabbed at Corfe Castle in the year 978 whilst partaking of a stirrup cup, the persons seated on either side of the drinker rise with

him to protect him, so that no enemy can take advantage of his defenceless position.

Many of the Companies also crown their Masters and Wardens after the election each year, and each has some different custom in connection with this ceremony. The Skinners' Company, for instance, carry round the crown and try it on the heads of several of those present, but the crown will not fit any until the previously elected new Master is reached. Then "a perfect fit" is announced. The Fishmongers also crown, or cap, their wardens, and the health of each is drunk in turn as the caps are placed on their heads. The outgoing Prime Warden toasts the new Prime Warden, the outgoing Second Warden, the new Second Warden, and so on. The Girdlers' Company crown their Master and Wardens with very beautiful crowns of gold and silver thread-work with the coat-of-arms of the Company worked on them. These crowns are at least four hundred years old and may be much more.¹ During the dinner, which is held in August, the toastmaster announces that the coronation will take place, and at once music can be heard in the distance. Across the beautiful little enclosed courtyard, with its vine-clad walls, and into the hall comes a procession: first the Beadle of the Company and then the musicians playing the march from "Scipio" on oboe and flute. This march was composed by Handel in 1726 and has been used for this procession ever since. Next come the crowns, borne on a velvet cushion, followed by the Clerk in his black velvet gown and the Butler with his silver loving-cup. The procession goes up the hall between the long tables and, on reaching the dais, the Clerk takes the Master's crown and, announcing the new Master's name, places it firmly on his head. The loving-cup is presented and the Master pledges the Livery in it and thanks them in

¹ I must express my very deep gratitude to the Clerk of the Company for the information he gave me and to him and the Master and Wardens for the opportunity afforded me of attending their last coronation dinner so that I could see the details of this, the most picturesque of all coronation rituals.



40 CHILDREN RUN ROUND ST. DUNSTAN'S IN THE WEST FOR
PENNIES FROM THE CORDWAINERS' COMPANY



41 MEMBERS OF THE STATIONERS' COMPANY ARE GIVEN BUNS
AND ALE AT THE HALL, ON FEBRUARY 26TH



"CALLER" RINGING THE LUTINE BELL AT LLOYD'S ON
THE REPORT OF A MISSING SHIP

a short speech for the honour they have done him. The Clerk moves on to the Wardens, who are also crowned in similar fashion, each thanking the Company and drinking to it. The procession then reforms and leaves the Hall, and, after a while, the Master and Wardens remove their crowns.

At the banquets given by the Goldsmiths' Company, a marvellous collection of plate is displayed. I recently had the opportunity of examining this plate very closely. The work and craftsmanship exhibited in some of the old pieces is truly amazing, and shows clearly to what heights the Guild had brought the craft at different times in history. "Hall marked" is an expression we all know and is a proof to-day of the excellent service rendered by the Company, for every piece of plate made in the country has to go to Goldsmiths' Hall to be stamped with the marks, which show its quality and the year and place of its manufacture. The Livery also has the right to inspect the gold coinage of the realm to see that it is not being debased. Once a year the coins are taken to Goldsmiths' Hall, where the chemists and assayers are waiting with their apparatus and chemicals to carry out the tests that ensure that our coins are of the value laid down by law. After the test, a notice to the effect that it has been carried out is inserted in *The Times*. This Trial of the Pyx, which is also made in the Dominions, used to be carried out in the Chapel of the Pyx in Westminster, where the King's boxes of treasure were stored, and the standards of the coins were also kept.

The Company of Vintners has the exclusive right of importing or exporting wines and spirits to and from the Port of London, or any other place within a limit of three miles; but, owing to the lack of opportunity, it never carries out the duties of "loading and landing, rolling, pitching and turning," as the wording of its charter has it. A free Vintner can still sell wine irrespective of customs or excise regulations, and this commercial privilege (the only one retained by any of

the Livery Companies) is exercised to this day. The Vintners were at one time one of the wealthiest of all the Liveries, and in the reign of Edward III gave a banquet at which five kings were present. These were, in addition to King Edward, David, King of Scotland, John, King of France, the King of Denmark and the King of Cyprus. In memory of this feast, the Vintners always greet the toast of the Company with five cheers instead of the more usual three.

Once a year, on July 12th, the citizens of London have the opportunity of seeing the officials and members of the Vintners' Guild in the streets, for on that day they go in procession to the Church of St. James (39). Two wine-porters walk in front in new aprons and with brooms in their hands; and they still go through the form of sweeping the street in front of the officials of the Guild in memory of the time when the London streets were so filthy that this task was necessary. The Beadle of the Company follows with the Stavesman, the Swan Warden and the Bargemaster, all carrying nosegays of flowers for the same reason, for it is said that the smell of the garbage on the streets was often more than could be borne.

Mention of the Swan Warden of the Vintners' Company reminds us of a privilege enjoyed by the Livery in conjunction with the Dyers'. These two Guilds had the right to own a proportion of the swans on the Thames, and, as the swan is a royal bird and has always been considered so, this privilege was a very important one in the Middle Ages, and the Company's accounts for the year 1509 show clearly that it was an old one even then. Queen Elizabeth laid successful claim in 1592 to all the unmarked swans on the Thames, and so the Vintners and the Dyers marked their birds by filing or cutting notches in the beaks. This is the origin of the inn-sign "The Swan with the Two Necks," which should read "The Swan with the Two Nicks." The marking of the birds was done once a year, in July, and is called the Swan Upping,



43 SWAN UPPING

From a painting on *Mary, the Queen*

a term which appears in Elizabethan documents. The "Swan Voyage" (50) starts at Southwark Bridge and proceeds to Henley. It is managed by the Royal Swan Warden and the Swan Wardens of the two Livery Companies. They catch all the swans and examine them for their markings. The assistants wear the traditional costume, and the swan banners are very much in evidence on the boats, as further described on page 114. On the evening of the last day a Swan Banquet is held, and the *pièce de résistance* on the menu is roasted cygnet.

The Apothecaries' Company for many centuries carried on a wholesale and retail business in drugs, thus managing, by example and competition, to keep up the standard of purity of those used in the manufacture of medicines; but now it has decided not to compete any longer with the legitimate trade and this aspect of its activities has come to an end. The Painters' Company still has the power to examine all paintings for exhibition in the City of London and to censor any that it considers unfit for public show. To Stationers' Hall lovers of books and manuscripts must feel a deep obligation, for it holds records of all published in the country, although the right of the Company to demand that every book be registered at the Hall has passed from it. On old books we can still find the words "Entered at Stationers' Hall," to remind us that at one time this was the law.

Before closing this chapter I must express my thanks to the officials of the Livery Companies of London who have so readily helped me with information, and my regret that I cannot include all the material that was so freely placed at my disposal. In the words of the Company toasts: "The Livery Companies of London, Root and Branch. May they flourish for ever."

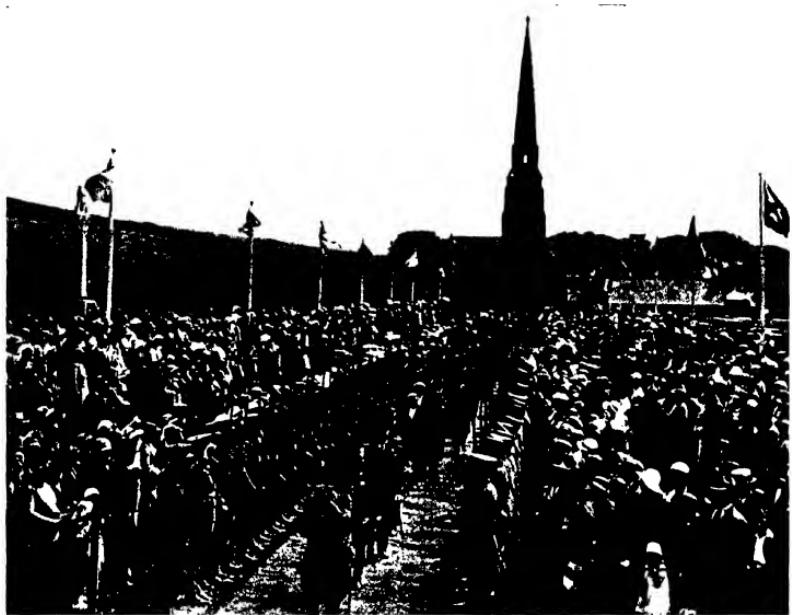
VI

CEREMONY AND THE LAW

THE Statute Books of the Laws of England are full of custom and tradition. Any frequenter of the Courts of Law, both civil and criminal, will constantly hear references quoted about cases, acts and laws that date back sometimes hundreds of years yet have remained unaltered to this day.

In the Isle of Man the laws are still read on the Thingwald Hill (45), and the people voice their assent. This is done once a year on Midsummer Day, and is the sole survival of the old Scandinavian law-givings which date back to the seventh and eighth centuries. These courts were always held in the open air and generally on a hill; just as we have the Thingwald or Parliament Field Hill in the Isle of Man, so there is to this day the Lovbjerg or Law Hill in Iceland, although it is no longer used for its original purpose.

Tradition says that the Thingwald hill, which is artificial, is composed of earth from the seventeen parishes of the island. It rises in tiers to a height of some twelve feet, and is eighty-five feet in diameter at the base. Along the road on the great day comes a procession (44), consisting of the Lieutenant-Governor of the Island, the Deemsters and representatives of the House of Keys, the assembly that corresponds to the House of Commons in England, and the clergy. They mount the rush-strewn steps of the mound. The Lieutenant-Governor then takes his seat at the top with the Bishop at his side, surrounded by the Council, whilst beside him the naked thirteenth-century sword of state of the island maintains guard over him, as it did in olden times over the



THE PROCESSION TO THE OPEN-AIR PARLIAMENT



45 READING THE LAWS IN THE PARLIAMENT

THE "THINGWALD" CEREMONY, ISLE OF MAN



COURT OF ADMIRALTY, HELD ON A BARGE.
ESTER, THE CITY MAYOR PRESIDING

King of Man. Below him sit the members of the House of Keys; then the Clergy; and, on the grass at the foot of the mound, the people, for no law or act passed on the island by the Deemsters and the House of Keys is law until the people have expressed their approval, even though the bill has received the royal signature. The first proceedings is the "Fencing" of the court; this forbids brawling or quarrelling on Thingwald hill under pain of death. The words spoken by the Coroner of Glenfaba, one of the sheriffs of the island, are as follows:

"I do fence the King of Man and his officers, that no manner of man do brawl or quarrel nor molest the audience, lying, leaning or sitting and to show their accord, and answer when they are called by licence of the King of Man and his officers. I fence this court! I fence this court! I fence this court! I do draw witness to the whole audience that the court is fenced."

Then the titles of the bills passed during the past twelve months are read, first in English and then in Manx, this being almost the only occasion when this fast-vanishing language can be heard. As soon as all the bills have been read, the new coroners, or sheriffs, for the ensuing year are sworn in by the Chief Deemster, and the outgoing sheriffs surrender their wands of office. The people then give three cheers for the King, which signify that they agree to the bills they have just heard read. The dignitaries then return in procession to St. John's Church, where the bills are signed by the Lieutenant-Governor and thus created statutes of the island.

There are many old and curious legal customs and courts in Great Britain and some account of these must find a place here, if not for their interest, then for their great antiquity.

One of these old customs is to be found in the Channel Islands, which are a veritable store of interesting survivals for the antiquary. Every inhabitant of the islands has the right to appeal to the royal courts of justice, if he thinks himself unjustly treated, and this

right of appeal is called "Clameur de Haro." If the islander involved uses the words "Haro! Haro! Haro! à l'aide, mon prince, on me fait tort!" all proceedings cease at once and the case is transferred to the royal courts. It is thus a veritable "Appeal to Caesar." Whether this right has been exercised recently I have been unable to find out, but in 1890 a public auction of household goods was interrupted by the eldest son of the family, who shouted these words, whereupon the sale ceased immediately and the case was later revised in court.

All over the country there are examples of the manorial Courts Leet and Courts Baron, further reference to which will be found in the chapters dealing with strange tenures and quit-rents. The Courts Leet date from the time of King Alfred, the word "leet" being of Danish origin; it is still used in Denmark to denote a division of the country for military purposes. Thus "leet" was probably adopted from King Alfred's Danish enemies and used to denote a division of the country for the purpose of the giving and maintenance of the law. The Court Leet can enquire into cases of felony, and also serves as a court of record. The Courts Baron can be found in many parts of England, but they deal chiefly with matters of rent and tenure, and are usually convened by the Lord of the Manor. The late Duke of Buccleuch recently revived a Court Leet in Warwickshire, a full account of the purpose and proceedings of which is to be found in the chapters dealing with tenures.

Lyndhurst in Hampshire has a Court of Swainmote, which deals with all matters concerning the New Forest such as pasturage, the collection and sale of firewood, and the cutting of turves. The right of "turbary" is one of the most important concerns of this court, which is formed of seven Verderers and is therefore often called the Verderers' Court. Turbary is the privilege granted to the owners of houses and cottages in the forest of using so many cords of turves, according to the size of their fireplaces. The forest-dwellers are



47 THE JUDGES' PROCESSION AT THE ELECTION OF A
LORD MAYOR



48 CUTTING THE FAGGOTS AT THE ANNUAL QUIT-RENT
SERVICE AT THE LAW COURTS



PORTREEVE AND COUNCILLORS TASTING BEER AT THE
GOLDEN LION INN, ASHBURTON, DEVON



50 SWAN UPPING AT TEDDINGTON, BY THE KING'S SWAN-
MASTER AND HIS STAFF

very jealous of this privilege, and one can often find a completely renovated house with the ancient fireplace intact so that the owner can retain his right of turbary. The Court has the power to deal with all offenders against the laws of the forest, for the police have no power in this respect. Another Verderers' Court is to be found in the Forest of Dean. Its powers have almost entirely disappeared, but it is considered a great honour to be elected Verderer, and the members meet at the Speech House at regular intervals. There are many privileges attached to the dwellers in the Forest, and the miners of that area have retained all their old rights.

Wherever there are fairs and markets, there were in former times the Courts of Piepowder, several of which have survived to this day. The word is a corruption of the Norman-French *Pied Poudreux*, or dusty foot, and our modern word "pedlar" has the same root. The wandering salesmen in Norman times were the chief merchants at the county and other fairs, and it was on the trade obtained from these fairs that their livelihood depended. Arriving at the fair ground, as they did on foot after perhaps days of travel, they were naturally covered with dust—hence the name. These Courts of Piepowder were established to deal with all disputes among traders at the fairs and to maintain order on the fair-ground. Therefore such a court was always one of summary jurisdiction, and offenders could be placed in the stocks or pillory, which was the usual punishment; but to-day they have substituted the modern system of fines! Such courts survive at Newcastle, at Sturbridge Fair, Cambridge, at Guildford in Surrey, where the charter of the fair dates from 1285, at Ely and at Bristol, where the Court of Piepowder is combined with the Tolsey Court, or "court of tolls."

In London there is the Court of the Liberty of the Savoy, which meets regularly to settle questions concerning the extent and boundaries of this little district and the houses included in it. This court is many centuries old and can deal with disorderliness, cases of

neglect of buildings within the Liberty, and undesirable residents. Fines are imposed by the jury, who fix the amount, and the money is used to support the court.

The Mayor of Rochester is also Admiral of the Medway, and every year a court is established on a barge anchored in the river (46). There he deals with questions concerning the oyster beds, which were at one time famous all over the world, and with the fishing rights, dredging, and all affairs that concern the upkeep of the river. The day ends with the famous Oyster Feast.

Finally, mention must be made of a more recently established court, that at Ascot racecourse. Owing to some unpleasant disturbances which occurred on this famous course at the end of the eighteenth century, the King ordered that the Chief Magistrate of the Metropolitan Police Courts should attend every year at the Royal Ascot meeting to deal with offenders against law and order on the spot, and so for three days this court meets in a special room under the Grandstand.

In London we can find a vast amount of tradition and custom connected with the administration of the law, and the legal bodies domiciled in the capital. Formerly, most judges were churchmen and a churchman used to shave the crown of the head, a proof of which we can see to-day in the judge's and barrister's wigs which are made with a bare patch on the crown. No one connected with the Church could have anything to do with the taking of human life, so the judge, when sentencing a prisoner to death, placed a small square of black cloth on his head to hide the tonsure and show that for the moment he had laid aside his clerical office. This square of cloth is used to-day and called the Black Cap.

Mention of judges leads to thoughts of them on circuit, and again we find old custom surviving: the judge on circuit still acts under three distinct commissions. Firstly he holds the Commission of Assize from the Statute of Westminster of 1275. This charter, which

was drawn up in Norman-French and not in the more usual Latin, is a code of law dealing with criminal offences and many of its clauses are still in force to-day. In the judge's commission its wording is still quoted in its original form and language. The judge tries his cases under the Commission of Oyer and Terminer (Norman again), which allows him to deal with those in which the Grand Jury has already found a true bill against the accused; and the prisoners are brought before him by virtue of his third commission, that of General Gaol Delivery.

In London the judges are sometimes presented with bouquets of wild flowers, and aromatic herbs are strewn on the tables in court. This is a survival of the time when the prisons were such filthy, noisome places that prisoners were prone to all kinds of disease; even the plague was no rare visitor to such places as Newgate and Bridewell. The flowers were given to the judge to counteract unpleasant odours, and the herbs were deemed a protection against infection.

The lawyers and barristers still obtain their legal training in the Inns of Court, which hold fast to their old customs. In the Temple there is a survival from the time when the crusading order of the Knights Templars owned the land which now belongs to the Benchers of the Inner and Middle Temple. Every night the Hornblower sounds his summons to dinner, as was done in the twelfth century to summon the Knights, who might be at prayer or wandering in the gardens by the river. The student of the Middle or Inner Temple still has to prove that he has eaten twelve dinners in Hall before he can be called as a barrister, and this is considered sufficient proof that he has attended diligently to his studies, a survival of a time before the strict examinations which are the rule to-day. Gray's Inn preserves its "Mootings," where difficult points of law are discussed, and the toast "to the glorious and pious and immortal memory of good Queen Bess" is still a nightly custom.

The barrister in England has no fixed fee, and the little fold at the back of his gown is the survival of the small pouch or pocket into which the applicant for his services used to drop the money before asking him to undertake the case, the pocket being behind the barrister's back so that he could not see how much had been paid and therefore could not be influenced by the size of the fee. A more significant survival of this custom is to be found in the fact that to-day the barrister is at liberty to refuse a case after he has heard the facts and after he has received his fee; and there is no legal power that could compel him to return the amount if he did not choose to do so. This cuts both ways, for the barrister, if he does not take his fee in advance, cannot sue his client for it!



51, 52 GOOD FRIDAY BREAD-DOLLS AT AYMESTREY CHURCH,
HEREFORDSHIRE.

The Lady with the bag insists that she is laden with the loaves of absent neighbours!



DISTRIBUTION OF PAX CAKES AT KING'S CAPLE,
HEREFORDSHIRE

VII

ECCLESIASTICAL CEREMONIES, DOLES AND CHARITIES

It is natural that the Church, whose teaching can be largely summed up in the one word "Remembrance," should maintain and preserve old customs. The decoration of our churches on such days as Palm Sunday, Easter Day, Christmas or Harvest Festival, and even their absence of decoration during Lent, can in a sense be termed old customs; but there are others, strange or odd, which have little or nothing to do with the actual ritual of religion.

Almost, if not quite, the most important building in the village in the Middle Ages was the church, and around it and the manor the whole life of the district revolved. Next to the squire, the parson was the most imposing figure, and thus it is not surprising that most village churches have something to show in the survival of old customs.

From the cradle to the grave the church had its hand in the life of the countryman, and to a very great extent provided the pastimes and amusements of the parish. In many a village to-day we can catch a glimpse of the life of four or five centuries back. Some of the simplest observances of an ordinary English Sunday, for instance, are very similar to those of hundreds of years ago. The morning service is attended regularly in the church, and in the afternoon, if the weather permits, a walk is a constant custom. The bells in the church tower announce the events of the village, for they ring at a wedding and toll at the passing of one of the community. Elsewhere mention has been made of the curfew

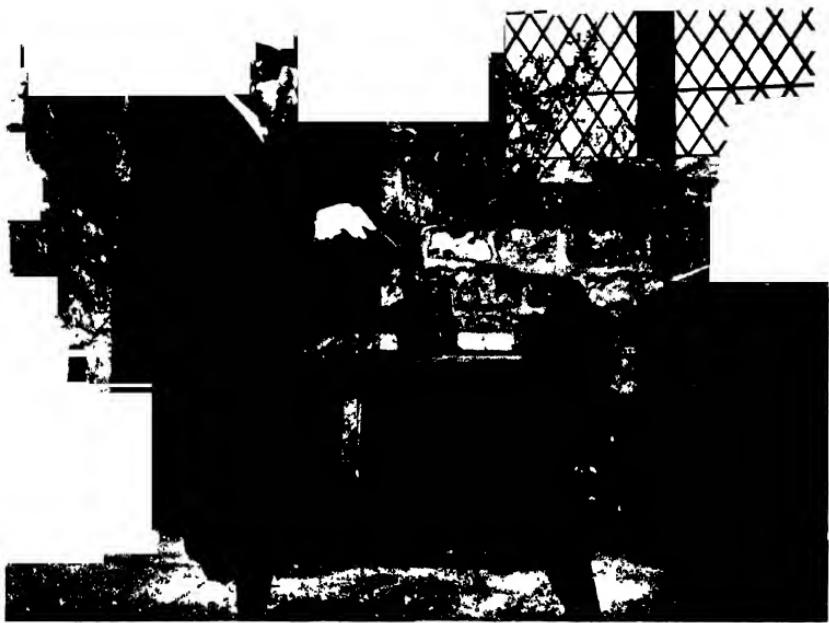
and angelus, which still sometimes survive in England. At Dunster, the Gabriel Bell is the same Ave Bell which was ordered to be rung morning and evening by the Bishop of Arundel in 1399, and most single bells are survivals from a long distant past, even if their name has been altered with the passing of centuries. The Wakes or, as they were also called, Feasts or Revels which were at one time universal in the villages still survive in Cornwall, and Harvest Thanksgiving is attended with all the old beauty of decoration. Socials and smoking concerts arranged by many a village vicar are a somewhat altered form of Church Ales, and Choir Outings, Sunday School Treats and Mothers' and Old Folks' Teas all have their counterparts in the Church festivals of the past.

Miracle plays still survive in many parts of the world, perhaps that at Oberammergau in Bavaria being the most famous; but at one time such plays were performed in most parts of England. To-day they survive in sacred tableaux which can be seen in many village churches, especially at Christmas time, while the recent innovation of cinema performances of a sacred character are almost a modern version. At Ambleside, rush-bearing still survives, reminding us of the time when rushes formed the carpets of church and houses alike. Another survival is the well-dressing ceremony at Tissington, where the wells, most important of all supplies for many villages, are beautifully decorated and blessed by the clergy once a year.

Such customs and observances are more common to-day on the Continent than in England, and France and Italy especially abound in religious festivals, full of old ritual and ceremony. With us the greatest wealth of survivals is to be found in connection with certain of our churches, cathedrals and abbeys, and this, in my own experience, never fails to arouse the interest of all who witness them. All our older churches and cathedrals were at one time Catholic fabrics, and in many which are now Protestant Catholic saints are buried and



54 THE CUSTOM OF DRESSING THE WILLS, LISSINGTON, DORSET, DERRY SHIRE.



RINGING THE MERCHANT ADVENTURERS TO THEIR
MICHAELMAS COURT, YORK



56 THE WAYFARER'S DOLE, THE HOSPITAL OF ST. CROSS,
WINCHESTER

have their shrines. Thus, for example, to the tomb of St. Edward in Westminster Abbey and to the shrine of St. Thomas à Becket in Canterbury Cathedral come Catholic pilgrims to reverence their saints, although those churches now belong to a faith which they consider heretical.

Another relic of Catholicism is to be found in the King's title of "His Most Religious Majesty," which is in actual fact a title and not, as Dr. Johnson would have it, "a formula to flatter Kings." This title was conferred by the Vatican, which also bestowed the title of "His Most Catholic Majesty" on the King of Spain, and "His Most Christian Majesty" on the King of France.

Westminster Abbey still holds a unique position among the churches in that "no bishop has any jurisdiction in it," as the Dean said on the occasion of the funeral of Mr. Gladstone, when the Prince of Wales wished the Bishop of London to say a few words about the great statesman after the funeral service. Whenever the Archbishop of Canterbury or Bishop of London has occasion to visit the Abbey, the Dean has the right to point out to them that he alone has jurisdiction over the church or any persons connected with it. In Canon Westlake's excellent *Guide to the Abbey* I found that the deed, which confirms this exemption from the episcopal jurisdiction and control, is dated 1222, so that the privilege must be older than that.

Strangely enough, however, the Dean has to relinquish his control on one occasion, and that is the Coronation. For this ceremony a layman and a Catholic, the Earl Marshal of England, the Duke of Norfolk, is in absolute control, and he alone has the power to grant or refuse permits of admission, and to make the arrangements. To show this, the Dean hands over the key of the Abbey to the Duke, who returns it after the ceremony. The Dean, however, retains his right to instruct His Majesty in the ritual and order of the Coronation service, and guards the regalia before it.

I have mentioned the Catholics in connection with

Canterbury Cathedral, but it is not generally known that, ever since the Edict of Nantes, when hundreds of Huguenots fled to England, the followers of this creed have had the right to hold their services in its crypt, which privilege they have retained and exercise to this day.

Many times I have heard remarks about the “queer costume” of our bishops, but once again tradition is the reason for it. The bishop’s apron is the remains of the cassock, and the gaiters and strings to the hat are relics of a time when the duties of a bishop took him out from parish to parish in his diocese—on horseback. So to-day we have a survival of costume which has its counterpart in certain traditions of dress in the Services, the legal profession and other walks of life.

In connection with our churches, there are many examples to be found of the preaching of special sermons and the reading of particular lessons on certain anniversaries. One of these sermons is preached yearly at the Church of St. Catherine Cree in Leadenhall Street, London, on October 16th. Sir John Gayer, who was Lord Mayor nearly three hundred years ago, left a sum of money to provide for the preaching of the “Lion” sermon on the day of his miraculous escape from a lion during a journey to the Far East. Confronted by the beast at night, when he was all alone and unarmed, he prayed the prayer of Daniel for deliverance and his life was saved, for the beast turned tail and disappeared. The Stationers’ Company attend once a year at Hendon Parish Church to hear the Rector preach a sermon on the text “Human Life is but a Bubble,” for which he receives the fee laid down in the will of Richard Johnson, who died in 1795 and is buried in the churchyard. After the service the congregation inspect the grave to see that it is well kept. Other sermons are preached annually in different churches to commemorate great national events of the past, such as Nelson’s victory at Trafalgar, Wellington’s victories in the Peninsula, and the Defeat of the

Spanish Armada in 1588; whilst at the Church of St. James in Aldgate there is a May, or Spring, celebration in the form of the preaching of a "Flower Sermon" every Whit Tuesday.

Mention of these bequest sermons leads to the consideration of charities and doles, many of which are of great antiquity and interest. One of the best known is the dole or charity given to twenty-one widows of the parish at the Church of St. Bartholomew in Smithfield, London, every Good Friday (38). The benefactor is nameless, but for centuries twenty-one sixpences have been placed on a certain tombstone by the church-warden on Good Friday morning. Each widow kneels at the grave to pick up the sixpence, walks over the stone, and is then given a hot-cross-bun and a further half-a-crown. The original benefactor's name perished with the records of the parish in the Great Fire of London in 1666. The fund for the bequest has since been diverted to other purposes; but, owing to the generosity of an antiquary of the City of London, the widows still receive this strange charity each year.

The Wayfarer's Dole at the Hospital of St. Cross in Winchester (56) is a survival of the former wholesale hospitality of the great religious houses, which came to an end under Henry VIII. It dates from the time of Henry of Blois, who instituted this form of charity in Winchester. Everyone who asks for the dole receives a piece of bread and a horn of ale, and many curious visitors attend daily for it, in addition to the tramps to whom this dole is well known.

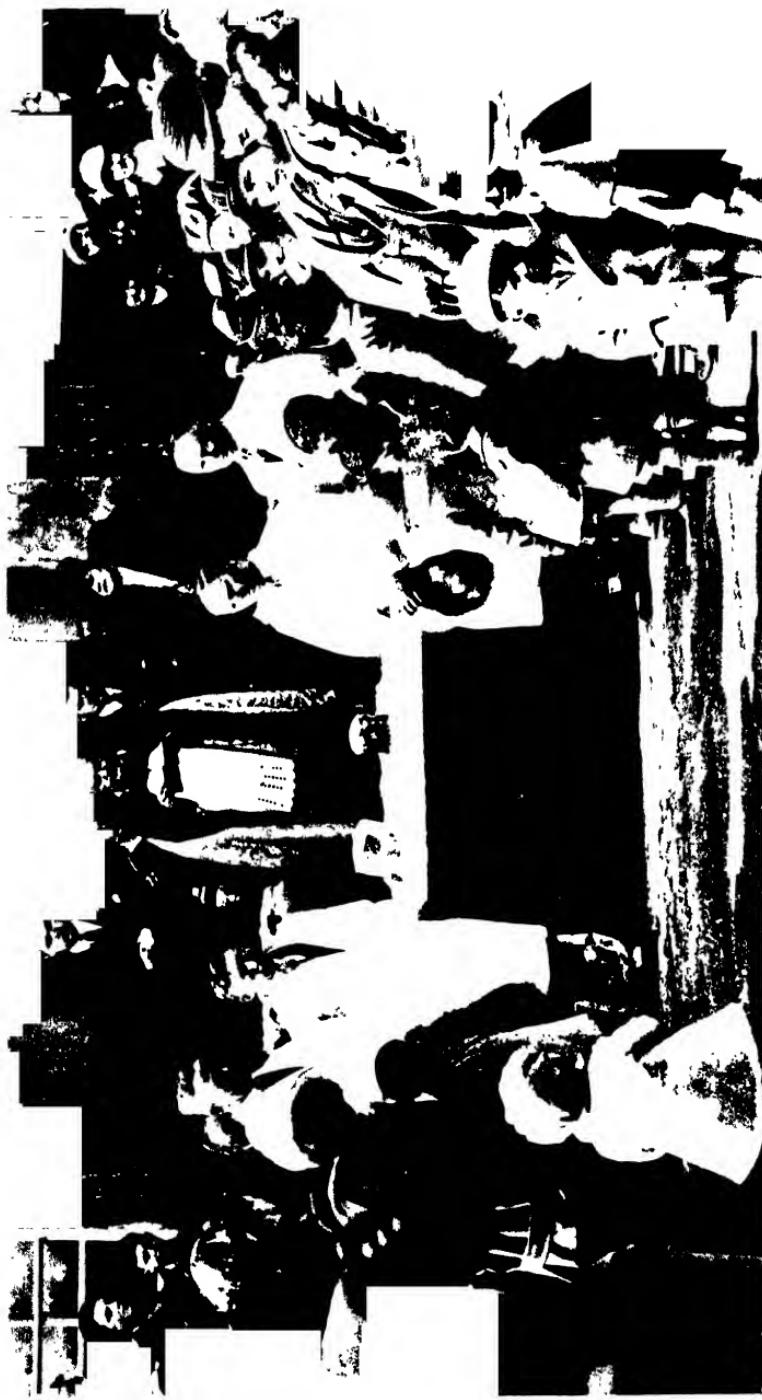
One of the most remarkable doles in England has been in existence for over eight hundred years. Tradition says that, when Lady Tichborne was dying, she asked her husband for a piece of land to establish the giving of flour and money to all poor people for all time, annually on the Feast of the Annunciation. He, rather brutally, snatched a burning stick from the fireplace and told her she might have as much as she could crawl round before the stick burnt itself out. The Lady

prayed to Heaven for assistance and, with a sudden access of strength, managed to encircle a piece of twenty-three acres whilst the stick burnt steadily without being consumed. This piece of land is still called "the Crawls," and provides the money for the Tichborne Dole (57-8). A special service is held in the church and the priest blesses the flour, which is later distributed among the poor; and the Tichborne family, mindful of the curse which Lady Tichborne placed on them should they ever alter her bequest, have kept up the distribution of the dole to this day. Another quaint dole is given in London, in Bishopsgate on Good Fridays. This was established in the sixteenth century by a merchant named Peter Symonds, the sum he bequeathed being used to provide sixty new pennies and sixty packets of raisins for the youngest boys from the Bluecoat School, or Christ's Hospital. This famous institution is the recipient of another strange bequest. A certain Mary Gibson, who died in 1773, left money to pay for a sermon and service every August 12th, and the Governors of Christ's Hospital, which was also remembered in her will, must go to Sutton in Surrey and open the family vault of the Gibsons to see that it is in good repair and has not been tampered with. Tradition goes on to say that, when the last member of the family has been buried in the vault, it is to be locked and the key thrown into the River Jordan. This bequest throws an interesting light on the body-snatching crimes of the eighteenth century, for it was fear of this that led Mary Gibson to insist on the inspection of the vault.

The Countess of Richmond's Charity is still distributed every year at Westminster Abbey, and again and again we can read notices affixed to the railings of a church announcing that some dole or charity will be distributed on a certain day, for countless well-to-do people in the course of centuries have left money or property to be devoted to purposes of charity. Only a few weeks ago I saw such a notice on the railings of the Church of St. Clement Danes in the Strand, announcing

57 THE TICHBORNE DOLL IN 1671
Playford's Queenes and Cries at Tichborne, near the Tichborne Hall





58 BLISSING THE FLOUR AT THE TICHBORNE DOLLY, HAMPSHIRE

that a certain charity would be given to those who had been in service in the parish for a period of not less than five years. We can find charities for providing bread, beer, coals, tobacco, plums, raisins and all manner of things; most parishes in the country can show examples. Herrings are provided by the will of Richard, Lord Rich, the founder of Felsted School, and the poor of



A BIDDENDEN CAKE

Clavering, also in Essex, receive their herrings in Lent through the generosity of John Thake, who died in 1537. Some of these old charities and bequests have been diverted from their original purpose by the Charity Commissioners, who can legally do this, but most seem to have remained almost exactly in their original form.

At Biddenden in Kent there lived in the twelfth century two sisters, Eliza and Mary Chulkhurst, who were joined together at the hips and shoulders like the Siamese twins. At the age of thirty-five one of the sisters died and the other was advised to undergo an operation so that her life might be saved; but she

refused to be parted from her sister and died herself a few hours later. They left, in their will, certain lands to the churchwardens of the parish, from which the poor were to be supplied with bread and cheese, and strangers with little cakes. The sum is about forty pounds yearly, and a thousand small cakes, bearing the representation of the Biddenden Maids on them, are distributed to all strangers who attend.

Every five years, at Knill's Mausoleum near St. Ives in Cornwall, girls under ten years of age dance round



A "PAX CAKE" FROM KING'S CAPLE

a grave for a quarter of an hour and sing the hundredth Psalm. Five pounds is then divided amongst them by the trustees of the estate of John Knill, who died in 1811, and two pounds given to the widows who must accompany the girls as chaperones. The fiddler receives a pound. Five pounds are paid to the best maker of fishing nets in the village and five pounds to the parents, if over sixty, who have reared the greatest number of children without receiving relief from the parish.

A vast list is at the disposal of the student of these charities and their study is interesting as showing, in many cases, the strange mentality of their donors. Yet to leave money to provide a bull to be baited, as was done at Wokingham, was not thought stranger in 1661 than it would be to-day if someone left money to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals!

Charities have been founded to embellish churchyards,

to provide for the singing of certain psalms and hymns, to waken servants in the mornings, wash tombstones, and for thousands of other services and causes such as the relief of seamen's widows. In the final chapter of this book I have spoken of later customs, and these, for all we know, in several hundred years' time may seem as strange to our descendants as do some of the old ones to us.

VIII

CUSTOMS IN THE COUNTRY (1)

PROGRESS is the enemy of tradition. Before the growth of industrial cities, old customs and ceremonies wither and die. Proof of this can be found in every city in Britain, for, if the customs we keep up would fill a volume or two, those that have decayed and disappeared would fill a library. In the country, however, “the old order changeth” not, and we can find ages-old customs still fresh and green, old superstitions as firmly believed in to-day as they were when the Saxons ruled England, and old ceremonies that are seemingly an essential part of the daily life of the people. Many of these are so quaint and so full of picturesque ritual that I have felt compelled to describe them at some length, so that under the heading of “Customs in the Country” several chapters have really been grouped.

Very few towns in England can boast of such a store of old custom and ceremony as Hungerford in Berkshire. It has no Mayor and Aldermen, not even a town council to manage its affairs like our modern townships and so-called model villages; but a High Constable assisted by a Port Reeve, Bailiff, the tything or tutti men, and a body of feoffees. The High Constable is chief magistrate, coroner and Lord of the Manor, and is elected from those who have already held the offices of Bailiff and Port Reeve. The festival of Hocktide (61-2), which falls a fortnight after Easter and was at one time celebrated all over the country, is now known only to Hungerford, which keeps up the feast with all the ancient ritual and tradition. Some antiquaries say that Hocktide is from the German words “Hoch” and



"RIDING THE STANG"



59, 60 OLD YORKSHIRE COUNTRY CUSTOMS
From *The Costume of Yorkshire*, 1814

“Zeit” meaning “high” and “period or time,” so that the name denotes a period of high festival or rejoicing, or, as in the modern German word “Hochzeit,” meaning “wedding” and derived directly from the same source, a wedding feast. If we add to this the Danish “Hoj Tid,” meaning a festival, I think it is clear that this is much more likely to be the correct derivation than that which would have it that Hocktide comes from the word “hocken,” to bind, so that the feast commemorates a slaughter of the Danes. The only Danish massacre which could conceivably have been the cause of rejoicing was that ordered by Ethelred the Unready: this, however, took place on St. Brice’s Day in November, and would hardly, therefore, be commemorated in the spring.

The great patron of Hungerford was John of Gaunt, fourth son of Edward III, and the Hocktide festivals undoubtedly commemorate the granting by him of certain fishing rights in the River Kennet and the free use of some public land as a common, to which James II later added further grants, making up the area known to-day as Hungerford Common. John of Gaunt also made the citizens of Hungerford a present of the famous horn, which is carefully preserved by the High Constable and on which we can still read the following inscription:

John a Gavn did give and grant the riall of
Fishing to Hungerford tovne from Eldred
Stub to Irish Still excepting som several mill pound

Jehosophat Lvcas was Cunstabl.

The Town Crier with the horn ushers in the Hocktide festival (61), and on Hock Monday proceedings open with the “watercress supper” at the “John o’ Gaunt.” This meal consists of black broth, welsh rarebit, maccaroni and watercress salad, washed down with bowls of punch. On the Tuesday, the Hocktide Court is

convened and the various officials, such as the water-bailiff, the ale-tasters and the hayward, are elected. The tything men, or "Tutti men," so called from the West Country word for a bouquet or bunch of flowers, receive their poles, which are garnished with an orange and bunches of wild flowers, and proceed to collect the toll of one penny per head from everyone in the town for the services they have rendered during the past twelve months. If the money is not paid, they demand a kiss from every woman in the house, and this is usually given, although some of the girls in Hungerford have been known to barricade themselves in their houses to avoid paying the toll! The High Constable then gives a luncheon at the "Three Swans," and pennies and oranges are thrown from the windows for the boys of the town to scramble for. On the following day the Court Baron is held, and all residents over fourteen years of age must attend under penalty of a fine of one penny. The different officials are sworn in at this court, and the Sandon Fee Hayward is elected. After the list of "Rescients" has been read the Sandon Fee Court proceeds to its business of regulating the feeding of cattle on the marshes, the fees for which are used to pay for the luncheons of the Sandon Fee Court. The day ends with the High Constable's banquet, and at midnight the toast of "John of Gaunt" is drunk in solemn silence. Hocktide is then over.

Helston's Furry (63) dance, held on May 8th each year, is one of the oldest surviving customs in England. It is of Celtic origin, and many and various are the explanations of the word "Furry." Of these there are two that seem to present the strongest claims of recognition. One is that the word is simply a corruption of "feria," meaning a fair or festival; but, if we can believe that the Helston festival is of more remote origin, we are offered the second choice of a corruption of the Roman festival of *Floralia*. Flora was a famous Roman courtesan, who left all her money to the citizens of Rome on condition that they should hold a feast in the



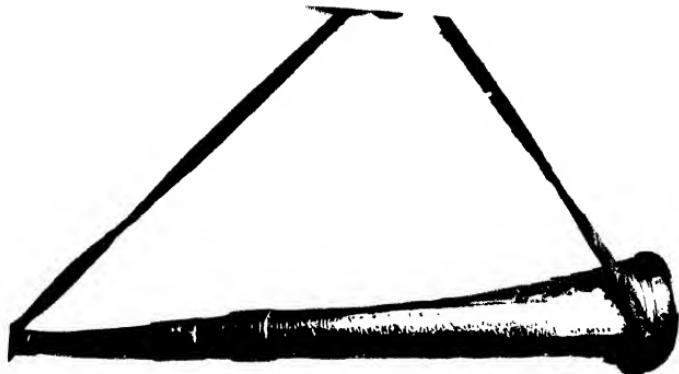
61 BLOWING JOHN O' GAUNT'S HORN TO ANNOUNCE THE HOCKTIDE FAIR AT HUNTERFORD, BERKSHIRE



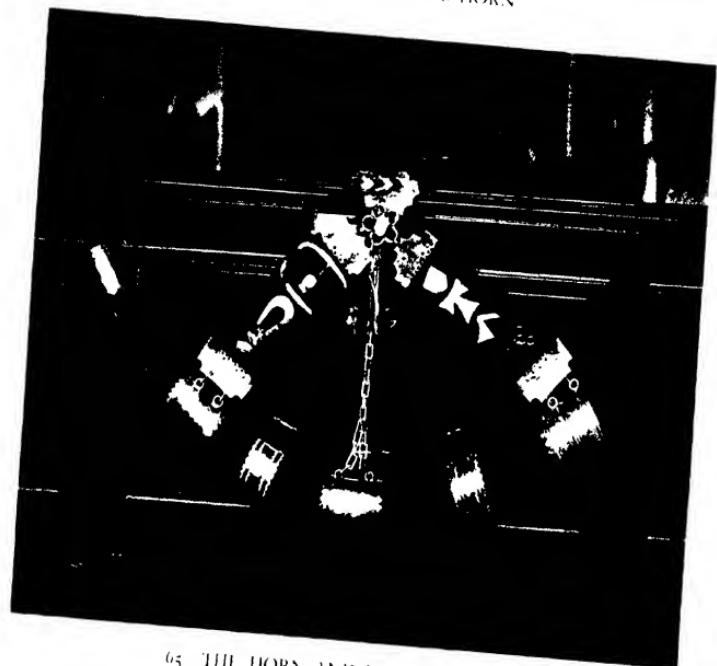
62. DISTRIBUTING ORANGES, HOCKTIDE, HUNTERFORD



63. CHILDREN WITH WILLOW BRANCHES AT THE FLORAL DANCE, HELSTON, CORNWALL.



64 JOHN OGUNTE'S HORN



65 THE HORN AND BALDRIC, RIBON



66 THE HELSTON FLORAL DANCE, CORNWALL

spring in her memory. These festival periods were known as the *Floralia* and in course of time took on the character of a celebration of the return of warmer weather, Flora becoming the goddess of flowers and trees. It is quite within the bounds of possibility that the Romans brought this custom with them to Britain, and that it remained after their departure.

The inhabitants of Helston, or "Helleston," state that the dance celebrates the victory of their patron saint, St. Michael, in a fight with the devil who, when he was worsted, dropped his weapon, a huge stone that had at one time formed the barrier to the gates of Hades. This block of granite (Hell's Stone) fell in the town in the courtyard of the Angel Inn. To support this picturesque story they point out that a stone was to be found deeply embedded in the soil in the yard of this hotel until 1783, when it was broken up and taken away.

At dawn a band parades the streets, and dancing begins early. This early morning dance was at one time called the *Servants' Dance*. After breakfast, a holiday is demanded, and granted, for the boys of the grammar school, and later the main dance begins, usually headed by the town officials with their ladies (66). The couples dance to a maddeningly monotonous tune, called the *Furry tune*, along the streets and in and out of the houses, where narrow passages and low doorways often reduce the band, which heads the procession, to some few of the smaller and handier instruments. A writer in *The Gentleman's Magazine* gave the following account in 1790:

"At Helstone, a genteel and populous borough town in Cornwall, it is customary to dedicate the eighth of May to revelry (festive mirth, not loose jollity). . . . In the morning, very early, some troublesome rogues go round the streets with drums or other noisy instruments, disturbing their more sober neighbours; if they find any person at work, make him ride on a pole, carried on men's shoulders, to the river over which he is to leap in a wide place, if he

can; if he cannot, he must leap in, for leap he must. . . . About the middle of the day they collect together, to dance hand in hand round the streets, to the sound of the fiddle, playing a particular tune, which they continue to do till it is dark. This they call a 'Faddy'. . . . It is, upon the whole, a very festive, jovial and withal so sober and, I believe, singular custom."

The Helston Furry dance is combined with a fair, and it is therefore appropriate to mention some other famous fairs. Corby, in Northamptonshire, holds its Charter Fair every twenty years, a right granted to the town by Queen Elizabeth in 1585 and confirmed by Charles II in 1682. It is held on Whit Monday, and, as the last occasion was in 1922, we can look forward to the opportunity of visiting Corby for the Charter Fair in 1942. On the morning of the Fair the townspeople erect barricades across every road and track that leads to the town, and everyone who passes these must either pay toll or else be carried, the men on poles and the women in chairs, to the stocks, in which they are kept until the toll is forthcoming. Later in the day the Charter is read all round the town, and the inhabitants are then free of bridge-tolls and town tolls, and need not serve on juries or in the militia for the next twenty years. In the evening, the organisers of the fair and the visitors are carried in their turn to the stocks, from which they have to purchase their release.

I am extremely grateful to the Mayor of Honiton, the famous lace town of Devonshire, for particulars of the annual fair held there, which last year (1937) attracted such an immense crowd of visitors. Its Charter was granted to Isabella, Lord of the Manor, in the twelfth century, and stipulated that the fair should be held annually for three days, commencing Whit Monday. Owing to the uncertainty of our climate in the early part of the year the date of the fair has now been changed to the first Tuesday after July 19th.

Proceedings begin with this announcement by the Town Crier:

“Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!
“The Glove is up and the Fair has begun
“No man shall be arrested
“Until the glove is taken down.
“GOD SAVE THE KING!”

The Crier's staff is surmounted by a huge gilt glove, which is probably symbolic of friendship and immunity from arrest and molestation during the period of the fair. The children of the town repeat each sentence after the Crier and, as a reward, showers of pennies are thrown to them from the windows of the Angel Hotel (67). As these pennies have previously been heated, the children splash water on them from a near-by pool to cool them, and the resulting scramble and splashing is a real child's idea of fun. The afternoon and evening are devoted by all to the fun of the fairground.

At Southwold, Suffolk, there have been several fairs. In 1227 the Abbot of Bury had a grant for “Fair at Suwald” upon the eve and day of St. Philip and St. Jacob, to be held in the churchyard; two annual fairs were granted in 1489. One of these was held on “the Vigil, the Feast and the day following” of St. Bartholomew, and was discontinued in 1815; the other held “the whole three days of the Feast of the Holy Trinity” continues to the present time. The Charter of Trinity Fair is read three times by the Town Clerk at the opening of the Fair on the Monday after Trinity Sunday; its runs thus:

“BOROUGH OF SOUTHWOLD Know all persons present together that the Mayor, Alderman and Burgesses of the Borough of Southwold in virtue of the several powers rights and privileges given granted and confirmed by divers Charters or Letters Patent by former Kings and Queens of England to their predecessors the Bailiffs and Commonalty of the said Borough and which in and by a certain Act of Parliament made and passed in the 5th and 6th years of the reign of His Late Majesty King William the Fourth entitled ‘An Act to provide for the regulation of Municipal

Corporations in England' are reserved to the said Mayor, Alderman and Burghers and all others powers whatsoever enabling them in this behalf, *do hereby proclaim and publish* that the Fair which (by certain Letters Patent granted by King Henry the Fourth in the 20th year of His reign and by divers subsequent Letters Patent confirmed) is directed to be, and of right accustomed, ought to be held within the said Borough of Southwold *is declared now* duly open and the same fair shall so continue, during the *three days* immediately following the feast of the Holy Trinity, and no longer, of which all persons are required to take notice.

The Trinity fair, from being an occasion of buying and selling in the High Street is now an extensive pleasure and amusement fair held on the South Green, and some of the more demure of the inhabitants have several times unsuccessfully endeavoured to get it abolished. One such attempt was made in the 1870's and the petition was signed by various notabilities, including the Strickland sisters, Victorian authoresses who resided in the town, but it failed. On one occasion the municipal authorities and police were drawn up across the street to bar ingress to the fair people, but the latter were equal to the occasion, and their huge steam road engine bore slowly down upon the line of officials, who thought it better to clear out of the way.

Fairs can still be found all over England, although many have disappeared even during the last thirty years. There are still Statute Fairs in Lincolnshire, which were inaugurated for the purpose of hiring servants, and Stratford-on-Avon has its "Mop" Fair for the same purpose (71). This is one of the biggest fairs in England and certainly the best known in Warwickshire, attracting almost as many visitors in October as the birthplace of the poet does during the summer. These Statute Hiring Fairs were usually held in September, and the farm servants who were hired in this way contracted to work from Michaelmas to Michael-

mas. In a few places "Runaway Mops" were held a few weeks later. At these all who had declined to go to the new situations found during the Mop and had thus "run away" from their contracts stood a second chance of obtaining employment.

At all these Hiring Fairs (69) the men and women stood in rows in the street each exhibiting some badge to show his trade. The cowman had a wisp of straw in his buttonhole, the ploughman a piece of whipcord. Carters carried their whips and shepherds their crooks. To-day, we can still find a few local worthies who attend the Fairs wearing the badge of their calling.

Until the middle of the last century London had its great Charter Fair at Smithfield, but that has now vanished, as have also the famous Gingerbread Fairs in Birmingham. If we bear in mind that the original purpose of these was the sale of certain commodities for which the district was famous, and that in the Middle Ages they were more markets than the fairs we know to-day, we can understand the origin of these names and others, such as Chertsey's Onion Fair, which is fast vanishing, but which was once one of the greatest markets near London and was held on Holy Rood Day. Perhaps an enlightened Urban Council will one day revive this great Surrey festival. There is also the famous Nottingham Goose fair (74). The Sloe Fair of Chichester is an exception; it takes its name from a great sloe tree that used to stand at the entrance to the field in which it was held. This last was one of the principal markets of the South of England and was founded by Ralph, Bishop of Chichester, in the twelfth century.

In Hampshire, the most important market was Weyhill Fair, and it is recorded that sheep were once sold there to a total of £300,000. In 1822 this sum had dropped to £70,000, but to-day the sheep are conspicuous by their absence. It is held on October 10th, and has been in existence since the eleventh century. In Cobbett's *Rural Rides* we can read a highly entertaining

tirade against the exorbitant prices charged in shops, and lamenting the fact that the fairs were losing in the competition with them. Cobbett wrote this after buying a riding whip at Weyhill Fair for three shillings after a Salisbury shop had demanded seven shillings and six-pence for the same article.

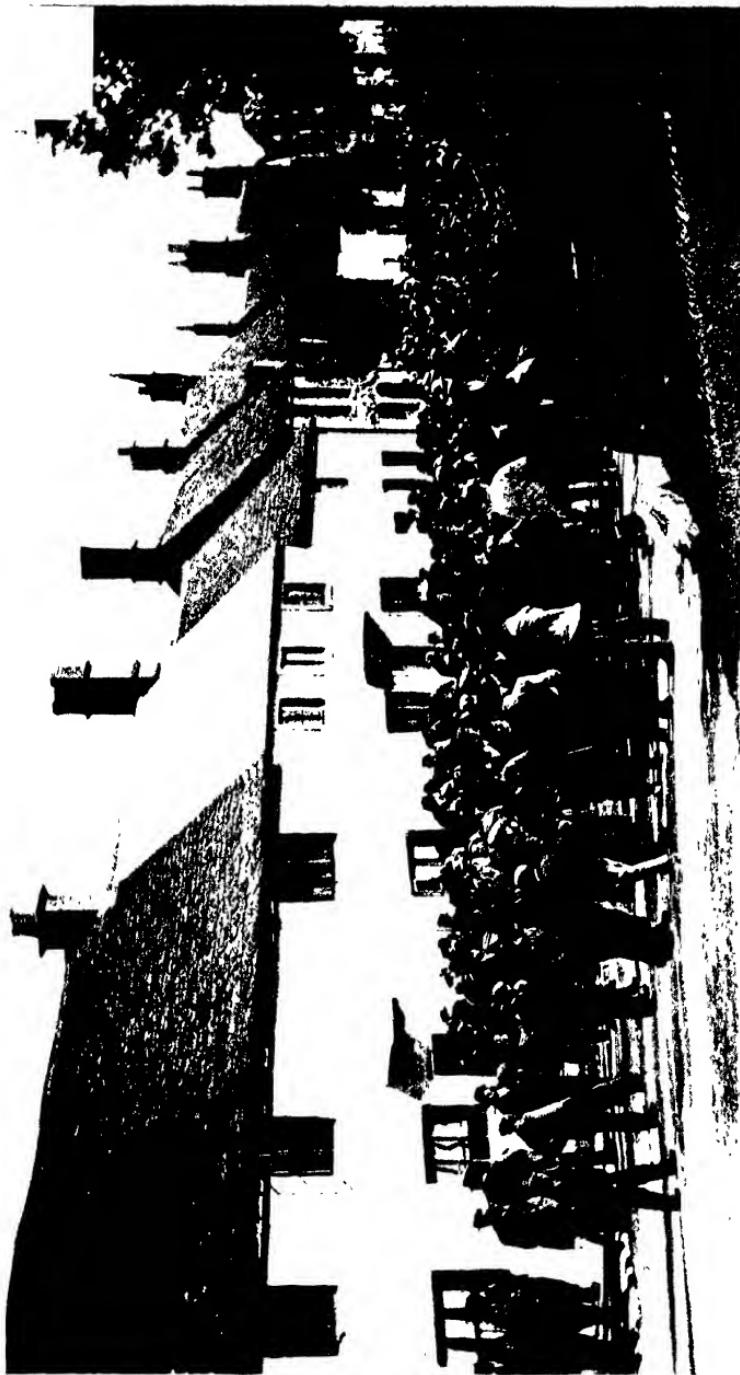
Sherborne in Dorset holds a Pack Monday Fair, and I am grateful to the Custos and Librarian of the Abbey Church of St. Mary for the following particulars. This fair was first held in 1490, on the completion of the rebuilding of the fifteenth-century Abbey Church, and is now the sole survivor of the three great fairs that were once held in Sherborne. Both the "Fair on the Grene" on December 29th and the "Castletown Fair" on July 15th have disappeared, and, although the business side of the Pack Monday Fair, which is still held on the Monday after Old Michaelmas Day, October 10th, has decreased, the fair still flourishes. There is a curious custom in connection with this fair. At midnight on the evening beforehand what is locally known as "Teddy Roe's Band" parades the town to usher in the Fair. Bands of boys and girls with linked arms rush through the streets blowing horns, whistling, rattling tin kettles and tootling tin trumpets with all the orchestration of Charivari to make a terrific bray of discordant sound. There are various explanations of this, but the most pleasant and the most enticing is that suggested by Mr. H. J. Massingham in his *Genius of England*, that Teddy Roe was foreman of the masons on the nave reconstruction, and this cheerful noise of rejoicing sound celebrates the completion of the great fan vault of the new Perpendicular Abbey Nave on October 12, 1490. Certainly the custom has been kept up ever since, although Pack Monday Fair has a very much more ancient origin than the abbey reconstruction, dating back, it is suggested, to Edward I. It is to be hoped that the young folk of Sherborne will continue to roar through the streets rejoicingly after midnight on that October evening for many years to come,



67 CHILDREN SCRAMBLING FOR HOT PENNIES, HONTON FAIR, DEVON



68 CHILDREN CELEBRATING PLOUGH MONDAY, SWAFFHAM PRIOR, CAMBRIDGESHIRE



69 THE HIRING FAIR, BURFORD, THE CARTHERS HIRING,

From a photograph of some fifty years ago

for the fan vault is worth commemorating. It is a magnificent design, and in some ways may be regarded as the most satisfactory of the select band of fan vaults in greater English churches. Some say that the first celebration was when the workmen made an impromptu band with their tools as instruments and started their festival of gladness in the churchyard. Another tradition is that workmen were ordered to pack up and be off by midnight on the Sunday when the vault was finished. Again it has been suggested that this is a survival of the days when there were few roads round the town, and therefore the boys used to go out with horns and drums to guide the men bringing sheep and cattle to the fair, and that for the same purpose the great bell of the Abbey was rung at four o'clock in the morning.

Mention has been made in this and other chapters of the officials who are appointed at the commencement of a fair or festival, and by certain Manorial Courts. Of these the ale-taster (37, 49), or ale-conner, seems to have given up his traditional duties. I have been able to trace only one exception, which occurs at the fair held annually at Barrow-in-Furness, where two ale-tasters are elected and have to carry out the task of visiting every public-house in the town and tasting the ale served there. They then make a report, and the first and second brands of ale are rewarded by the presentation of the red and blue ribbons. This custom dates from the time when the Abbot of Furness Abbey sent his ale-tasters into Dalton to choose the supply of ale for the Abbey for the following year. The competition for the best ale in Dalton is very keen, so that the dispenser of the Red and Blue Ribbon Ales is sure of excellent custom during the period of the fair!

IX

CUSTOMS IN THE COUNTRY (2)

MANY old survivals and customs commemorate grants or privileges given to a community or township, often hundreds of years ago. Such a survival is the Horn Dance at Abbotts Bromley near Stafford (80), on the borders of Needwood Forest. To-day it is only a picturesque tradition; but, to the inhabitants of the village in the reign of Henry III, it must have been a spontaneous expression of joy and relief. Needwood, like the New Forest and Sherwood, had seen the Norman Kings, particularly William Rufus, ruthlessly destroying villages and hamlets to clear the ground for the royal deer-forests. Men had found their living as charcoal-burners taken away from them, and when, in their desperation at seeing their families dying of starvation, they had dared to kill a deer to assuage their hunger, they had lost eyes, hands and sometimes life itself for the heinous offence of disturbing the royal sport. The death of King John brought a new era to England. The barons, who had wrested the Magna Charta from him and who ruled the country during the minority of Henry III, were ever alert to alleviate the distress caused by the misrule of John and his predecessors. Thus the people of Abbotts Bromley were granted their Charter De Foresta, which gave them back their land to do with it as they willed; and the dance was a natural expression of their thankfulness. It were well if the spectators of such old customs would sometimes bear in mind what lies behind the rites they witness. Then, perhaps, we would not so lightly discard these ceremonies that meant so much to our ancestors.



70 BREAD AND CHEESE IN THE HARVEST HOME PROCESSION,
BRENT KNOLL, SOMERSET



71 ROASTING AN OX AT STRATFORD-ON-AVON MOP FAIR



72 THE SEPTEMBER ST. GILES FAIR



MAY MORNING ON MAGDALEN TOWER
From the Painting by Hubert von Herkomer

TWO CONTRASTING OXFORD SCENES



OPENING OF THE NOTTINGHAM GOOSE FAIR



75 THE LICHFIELD BOWER



76 THE HAXEY HOOD GAME, ISLE OF AXHOLME, LINCOLNSHIRE
The "tool" holding the hood on the Haxey stone



77 AUCTION OF GRASS ON MEADOWS AT Y ARNTON, OXFORDSHIRE
BY DRAWING NAMED BALLS FROM A BAG

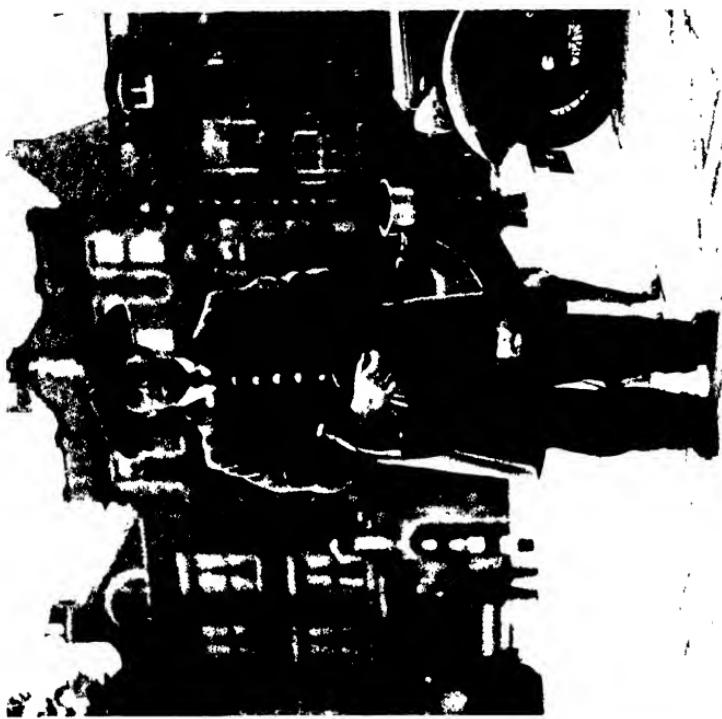
The performers fetch the six deer-skulls, complete with antlers and mounted on short poles, together with the bow and arrows and the hobby-horse from the church tower, where they are stored by the vicar, and then the symbolic dance begins. The deer run ahead through the streets, and the driver follows on his hobby-horse, whipping them on. The sportsmen, armed with bows and arrows, follow, chasing the deer and pretending to shoot at them, whilst the jester, complete with cap and bells, is also in evidence. A quaint old bowl is used to collect tolls from the spectators. The dance is celebrated now on the Monday after Wakes Sunday, that is to say, the Monday following September 4th.

Ratby in Lincolnshire also celebrates the gift of a royal benefactor, in this case John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, who, whilst out riding, saw some of the villagers mowing a meadow called Ramsdale, according to their annual custom. On being told what they were doing, John of Gaunt, who seems to have taken a great delight in fostering all rustic pursuits and industries, promised to give them a ewe for their ram, and presented them later with three pieces of land, called "the Ewes," the "Boots" and the "Wether," which they hold to this day, with the provision that the grass from the latter field should be sold annually to provide a feast on Whit Monday, which should be attended with certain ceremonials which he specified. These have been slightly altered in course of time, but in the main they are the same to-day as when John of Gaunt instituted them. The caterer, previously elected, orders lunch at the inn at Enderby, and after the meal, which consists chiefly of different sorts of cheese, salads, cakes and ale, he proceeds to sell the grass from the "Wether." After the sale, the caterer, escorted by seventeen others, rides to an inn at Leicester, where they dine and where they have previously provided lunch for ten inmates of Trinity Hospital, founded and endowed by Henry of Lancaster. After the dinner the health of John of Gaunt is drunk standing, two bottles of old brandy being pro-

vided for that purpose. Then the caterer calls for the bill, and, having paid it out of the funds obtained by the sale of the grass, the rest of the money is used to provide beer for the party for the rest of the evening.

In Whitby they still plant annually the Penny Hedge in the sand on the sea shore, and it must be strong enough to withstand three tides. The British Broadcasting Corporation arranged a description of this ceremony in 1937, but in *The Radio Times* confessed to a lack of knowledge of its origin. In the archives of Whitby Abbey is a document which affirms that this is an act of penance, originally performed by representatives of five distinguished families, one of these being the Percys. Five gentlemen, whilst hunting, followed a stag, which took refuge in a hermit's hut, and, as it was the hour of devotion, the latter barred his door and refused to allow the hunters to enter until he had ended his prayers. Enraged, they broke down the door and murdered the old man, a crime of considerable enormity even in the rough times of the eleventh century, carrying with it, if the all-powerful Church so willed, the terrible punishment of excommunication. Before these murderers could be re-admitted to the rites of the Church, the Abbot of Whitby, or Streon-shall, as it was called at the time, ordered that the representatives of the five families should consent to a penance in which they should yearly cut, with a knife costing one penny, sufficient brushwood to build a hedge on the foreshore, which must be constructed of sufficient strength to withstand three tides. During the planting of the hedge the Town Crier was to read out the full account of their crime. In course of time the families concerned managed, by payment of large sums to the Abbey, to obtain permission for others to perform their penance for them, and the hedge is still planted every year.

A curious custom is still existent at Haxey in Lincolnshire. According to tradition Lady Mowbray, whilst on her way to Church on Christmas day, lost her hood



In the Market-place, Ripon

78, 79 YORKSHIRE HORN BLOWERS



On the Green, Bainbridge



80 THE HORN DANCE, BY THE DEERMAEN, ABBOT'S BROMLEY, STAFFORDSHIRE



81 THE MAY DAY HOBBYHORSE PARADE, PADSTOW, CORNWALL

in a gale of wind, and twelve local worthies rushed to pick it up for her, even struggling together for the honour of being the one to restore it to her. She, on her part, was so pleased with the good manners of the men of the town that she presented it with a piece of land, which is called "Hoodlands" to this day, stipulating that the income derived from it should be used to provide a hood each year, for which the men of the town should contend. The hood to-day is a roll of canvas, some two feet long by four inches thick, and the townsmen struggle for it on the Feast of Epiphany, or Old Christmas Day (76). Whoever manages to kick or convey the hood to the cellars of a public-house is rewarded with a shilling.

The tracing of the origin of the "Dunmow Flitch" has proved to be very difficult, for the custom has lapsed very often during its history. In 1772 the Lord of the Manor stopped the presentation of the Flitch altogether, but it was revived again later, only to be "abolished as a nuisance" in 1809. The celebrated novelist, Harrison Ainsworth, was responsible for the revival of the custom in 1855, for his novel, *The Flitch of Bacon*, was so widely read and applauded that popular feeling almost forced the Lord of the Manor into consenting to the trial being re-instituted, and now it seems to have taken firmer root than ever.

It is claimed that the Lord Fitzwalter, in the reign of Henry III, ordered that "whatever married man did not repent of his marriage or quarrel with his wife, in a year and a day after it should go to the priory (this was probably Lees Priory) and demand the bacon, swearing to the truth, kneeling on two stones in the Church-yard." It seems impossible to disprove or confirm this origin; but, in any case, to-day the claimants are "tried" in court in Dunmow, Essex, and, according to the findings of the jury, the Flitch of Bacon is awarded.

A custom whose origin is easier to confirm is that which is termed the Lichfield Bower (75), held every year in June. In the reign of Edward the Confessor

every town and village was ordered to hold a *Campus Martius*, or annual meeting, to discuss the question of local defence, and at Lichfield a Court of *Arraye* and *View of Arms* was ordered on Bower Hill. Although the military duties have since passed to the Government, Lichfield still holds its court, and the suits of armour, of which the town owns a remarkable collection, are paraded and inspected.

In Warwickshire in August another semi-military custom is preserved. This is the annual archery competition of the Woodmen of Arden. The *Wardmote* of the Woodmen has been held at Meriden since 1785, with a short break during the Great War, but the Company of the Woodmen of Arden is of a much more ancient origin. The six-foot yew bow, which proved such a formidable weapon at Agincourt, Crecy and Poictiers, is still used in the Forest of Arden, and the prize for the best archer is a silver bugle. After the contests the Woodmen hold a ball, and other forms of entertainment help to pass away the evening.

Mention has been made elsewhere in this book of the Hornblower of the Temple in London, but there are two more towns to my knowledge where the hornblower still carries out his time-honoured duties. The best-known is at Ripon (78-9). In the year 1400, the chief official of the city was the Wakeman, and one of his duties was to sound the horn every night from the four corners of the Cross. The first Mayor of Ripon was appointed in 1604, when a new official made his appearance, the Mayor's Hornblower. The horn was sounded as a curfew, a custom which, according to local opinion, dates back to the reign of Alfred the Great, though I can find no authority to support this statement. To-day it is still sounded every night, as has been the rule for over five hundred years, and on great occasions the Hornblower wears the famous Baldric of Ripon, which supports the old horn and is ornamented with the coats of arms, in massive silver, of all the Wakemen of Ripon for five centuries.



82 THE MINEHEAD HOBBYHORSE, SOMERSET



83 THE OVERTON MUMMERS DANCING AT FREEFOLK,
HAMPSHIRE



84 SHROVE TUESDAY FOOTBALL BY QUARRYMEN IN THE SHADOW OF CORFE CASTLE

The other hornblower is at Bainbridge in Yorkshire (78). There the horn is sounded in the fields every night at nine o'clock to guide anyone home, who may be lost on the surrounding moors, in much the same way as church bells are rung at York and other places with the same object.

The celebration of Oak Apple Day, or Royal Oak Day, is a custom which has lapsed in many districts; but Northampton still remembers Charles II and his escape after the battle of Worcester through the kindly concealment of the oak tree. When a great fire almost razed the town in 1675, King Charles gave the citizens one thousand tons of timber from the royal forest of Whittlewood, and they still show their gratitude to their royal benefactor by remembering his birthday. On May 29th the children of Northampton wear gilt sprigs of oak in their caps, and the local statue of Charles II is decorated with boughs of oak. London, too, celebrates May 29th at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea, which Charles II founded as a home for Army pensioners. There a ceremonial parade of the veterans in their scarlet coats is held, and they march past the statue of the founder, which has previously been decorated with oak boughs. On this day also they change from their blue winter uniforms into the old-time scarlet when outside the grounds of the Hospital.

May 29th is also celebrated in Durham, but for a totally different reason. When Queen Philippa was regent of England in 1346, during the absence of her husband King Edward III in France, she had to meet a Scottish invasion. She defeated it at the battle of Neville's Cross, and during the engagement the monks of Durham chanted masses from the tower of Durham Cathedral for the success of the English army, while the abbot promised annual masses from the same spot if divine help were vouchsafed to the Queen's forces. The battle ended in the defeat of David of Scotland, and now every year the choir of the Cathedral sing anthems from three sides of the tower on the anni-

versary of the battle. The fourth side is omitted, because a choirboy fell from it once during the observance and was killed.

May Day on the Continent is rapidly becoming the festival of Communism, and red flags wave where once bunches of flowers heralded the return of spring. This is not the case in England, and many places still celebrate a very much greater wonder—that of the first tender shoots breaking through the hitherto frost-bound soil. In the delightful little Cheshire village of Knutsford, the May Day festivities will well repay a journey of many miles to view them. The roads are sprinkled with sand, brown and white being used, in readiness for the procession, and many people trace ingenious and beautiful designs before their houses in it. Tradition says that King Canute (Knut in Danish), who was once passing through the district, having had to cross a ford, took off his shoes in order to get rid of some sand that had got into them. While he was doing this a wedding procession passed, and he sprinkled the sand in front of the pair, wishing that they might have as large a family as there were grains of sand. The legend cannot be proved, but since the name of the village is "Knut's Ford" there may be some element of truth in this fable. A long May Day procession, with all the old characters of Maid Marion, Robin Hood and sometimes Jack-in-the-Green, leads the May Queen to the heath where she is crowned, and the day is then devoted to Maypole dancing, morris dancing and all the festivities which were a part of medieval England.

Padstow (81) and Minehead (82) celebrate their May Day with the help of hobby-horses, although in the latter town the horse is really a ship with the tail of a cow fastened to it, which is used to belabour the passers-by who refuse to pay toll. This quaint addition to the usual Mayday figures is due to the sinking of a ship with all hands in a storm off Dunster the evening before Mayday 1722, when the only object washed ashore was a dead cow, the tail of which was cut off

and used by the toll collectors. Maypole dancing also takes place at Temple Sowerby in Westmorland, where the Lord of the Manor has to provide a new Maypole whenever the old one is past its duties.

Witney still has its Jack-in-the-Green, and morris



A DECORATED TREE

dancers are to be seen in many parts of the country. A revival of this interesting and beautiful form of dancing, which John of Gaunt introduced from the "Moorish" dancers of Spain, has taken place quite recently in many villages and towns.

At Cowley St. John in Oxfordshire the children attend a beautiful May Day service in the church, each child carrying a bunch of spring flowers, whilst the University city itself keeps up its singing at Magdalen College. At five o'clock in the morning the May hymn is sung by the choristers from the top of the tower of

the College, and Chalmers' *History of the University* refers the origin to a requiem Mass which was performed regularly there for the soul of Henry VII. "This was afterwards commuted" (i.e. after the Reformation), it states, "for a few pieces of musick which are executed by the choristers and for which the Rectory of Slimbridge in Gloucestershire pays annually the sum of ten pounds."

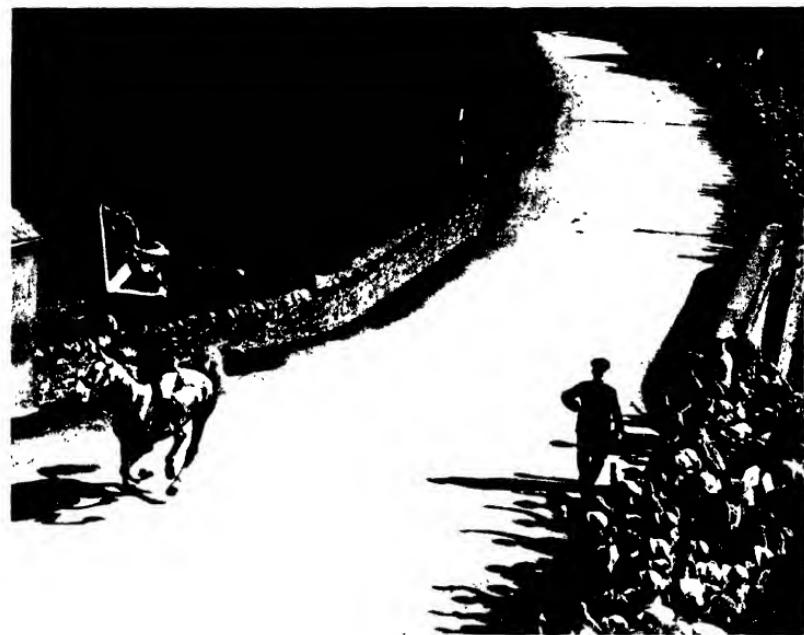


85 AT ALNWICK, NORTHUMBERLAND, WITH DECORATED GOALPOSTS

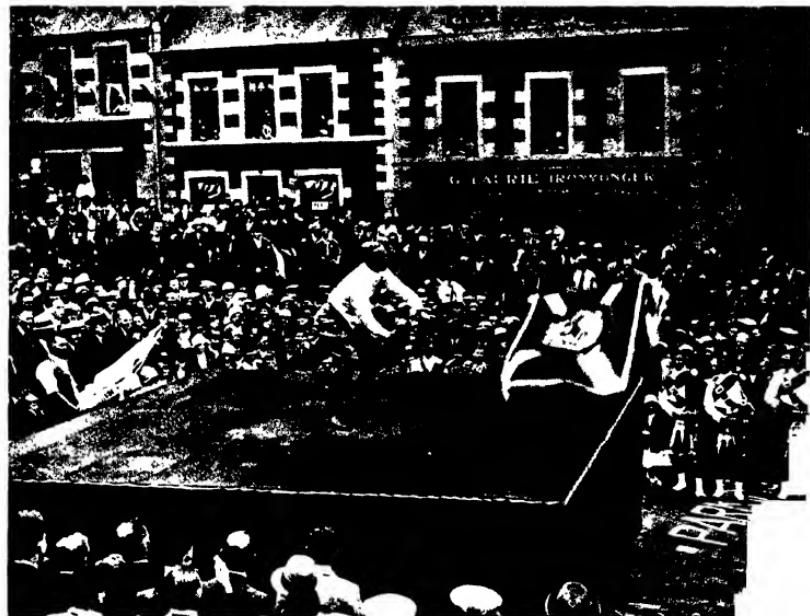


86 AT ASHBOURNE, DERBYSHIRE, BETWEEN "UPWARDS" AND "DOWNWARDS" IN THE RIVER HENMORE

SHIROVETIDE FOOTBALL



87 THE STANDARD BEARER ARRIVING AT THE TOLHOUSE
AFTER RIDING THE MARCHES



88 THE STANDARD BEARER CASTING THE BURGH COLOURS
SPEIKIRK COMMON RIDING

X

CUSTOMS IN THE COUNTRY (3)

IN the Middle Ages there was one duty of the parish and town officers that was of paramount importance and had to be carried out annually, the "beating of the bounds." When map-making and map-drawing were unknown mysteries, the bounds of a district had to be remembered to prevent encroachment; so, once a year, the civic or parochial officials perambulated the boundaries accompanied by the boys of the district, and the beating of certain landmarks with long canes was intended to impress these marks on the boys' memories. Any additional ceremonies observed at the same time, or any accompanying ritual was also intended to help the younger generation to memorize the bounds. What was once a universal matter of great importance has now become an isolated custom, but several districts keep up the old practice of impressing the boundaries on the minds of the rising generation.

In London, the Liberty of the Savoy, the Tower of London, and that arch preserver of old customs, the City, still keep up this ceremony (34-5). In the case of the Savoy, permission has to be obtained from the Benchers of the Temple for the officials of the Liberty to enter the Temple grounds in search of one of their marks. They must also enter the vaults of a bank to find another. The City officials have also to enter the Temple for the same purpose.

At Helston, a clod of earth and a slip of hawthorn are placed on each boundary stone and duly beaten by the boys (63); but in some cases it is not only the bounds but also the boys and the civic officials who are beaten,

or bumped, on the boundary marks. At Newbiggin in Northumberland two new freeholders are bumped on a stone on the moor called the "dunting stone," and in the parish of St. Mary's, Leicester, it was the custom to place any newly appointed parish official head downwards in a hole, which had previously been dug on the boundary line, and then thump him with a spade. Marlborough in Devonshire has a water boundary, as has Oxford, and once in each of them, when beating these water boundaries, the mayor has been reminded of the mark in a way he is not likely to forget. The Mayor of Marlborough was soundly ducked some years ago to impress the limit on his memory, and at Oxford the boat containing the beating party was upset in the stream and the whole boatload received a very wet reminder.

An interesting item can be found in the Churchwardens' Books of Chelsea, dated 1679:

Spent at the Perambulation Dinner	..	£3 10 0
Given to the Boys that were whipt	..	4 0

Lichfield has its bounds perambulated twice a year, the two ceremonies having each a different origin and being entirely separate from the other. On Ascension Day, the usual day chosen for the beating of the bounds in England, the choir of the cathedral go round the boundaries carrying pieces of elm, and at eight places, where wells used to exist, the Gospel for the day is read and a psalm sung. On the completion of the ceremony, the choir return to the Cathedral and throw down their pieces of elm, when more psalms are sung. Lichfield also has a Charter, dated 1664 and given by Charles II, which empowers the Bailiff and Brethren to elect a Sheriff on St. James Day (July 25th), and also commands the Sheriff under pain of a fine to perambulate the boundaries of the city. This charter is still in force, so that Lichfield's boundaries are impressed on the church in the spring and on the civic authorities in the summer.

One instance of boundary perambulation must not be omitted, although, strictly speaking, it should not



80 THE APPLI' WASSAILING RITE IN CIDER ORCHARDS, CARTHAMPTON, SOMERSET



90 THROWING HOT PENNIES TO CHILDREN AFTER THE
MAYORAL ELECTION AT SALTASH, CORNWALL

be termed an English custom, for the scene of it, Selkirk, is over the Border. This ceremony is known as the Selkirk Common Riding, and in 1937 the Gaumont British Film Company obtained some remarkably fine pictures of it, which they showed in the cinemas in their weekly newsreels.

The evening before, the senior Burgh Officer, attended by a piper and a drummer, announces all over the town that on the morrow the Riding will take place. Very early the next morning the band of pipers and drummers awakes the citizens, or "Souters," who form a cavalcade consisting of the constables, the Bailies and Council, the Hammermen with their flag and all the city officials, together with the band, or those of them who can ride and play at the same time. The riding of the bounds is done at a gallop (87) and, as refreshments are provided at many places along the route, falls are quite common. When the party return the rest of the day is devoted to festivity and revels, and the inhabitants celebrate the gallant deeds performed by the Selkirk Souters at the battle of Flodden Field by attending the ceremony of the "casting of the flag." This highly skilled feat of manipulating a heavy silken flag without tangling the folds is performed on a raised platform before an admiring crowd of spectators (88). Curiously enough, its counterpart can often be found in the local celebrations of some of the rural districts of German-speaking countries, especially Bavaria and Switzerland.

Just as Ascension Day was generally chosen for the beating of the bounds, so other Church festivals are linked with rural customs in certain places. Shrove Tuesday football matches are known to most frequenters of the cinema and, like the Haxey Hood game described in a previous chapter, these are much more in the nature of "free-for-alls" than a game of Saturday afternoon Association football on a specially prepared ground or field.

At Sedgefield, the church clerk and the sexton pro-

vide the ball, which is fought for throughout the whole length of the village, one goal being at the southern end and the other a pool at the northern end. The game begins at one o'clock and goes on till about five in the afternoon, and there are no fouls, no offside, and, in fact, no rules at all. Chester-le-Street has a little added excitement for, between the up-streeters' and down-streeters' ground, there is a stream, and most of the game is played in the water. Alnwick used to hold its Shrovetide football-match in the street, but so much damage was done to shop- and house-fronts that the Duke of Northumberland intervened and presented the town with a meadow called "the Pasture." There the annual game between the parishes of St. Michael's and St. Paul's is played (85).

The ancient Easter custom of "Pace Egging" (derived from the word "Pasche" or "Paschal") has almost died out now, though occasionally one finds remoter districts where this Easter variation of the Christmas mumming plays is still performed. However, in the main the Easter celebrations in England have deteriorated into the giving of Easter eggs on the morning of the festival, and even these have lost their old-time character in the cities and industrial areas of the country. Nowadays the Easter eggs are such marvellously decorated and embellished affairs that their connection with the hard-boiled variety of our forefathers seems almost impossible. The real Pace eggs are hard-boiled hen or duck eggs, dyed all colours, the most popular being scarlet, which colour was permitted by a special edict issued by the Pope in the Middle Ages as representing the Blood of the Redeemer. In Yorkshire, and some other rural districts, the children still search for the coloured eggs which have been hidden the previous evening by their parents and which they use later for a sort of bowls game.

Most of our Christmas customs, such as bringing in the Yule log, have now died out. The Mummers, who, even as recently as thirty years ago, were a regular

feature of Christmastide, are seldom seen to-day except in truly rural districts; but at Oxford there is one old custom which bids fair to last. This is the annual boars-head feast at Queen's College. The eating of boars-head at Christmas is of Scandinavian origin. It was at one time the universal dish for that festival, for the head of the boar was used as an offering, or sacrifice, at the feast of Jul, or Yule as we call it; but Queen's College will have it that their custom celebrates the marvellous escape of a student of the college over five hundred years ago. As this student was walking down Shotover Hill, deeply immersed in the study of Aristotle, he was attacked by a wild boar. Being weaponless (so runs the story), the young man, with great presence of mind, thrust "Aristotle" down the beast's throat, whereupon it fell dead on the spot. A window in Horspath Church near Shotover depicts this incident, and the Queen's College students point to this as their evidence. Actually the boars-head feast goes back beyond Christian times into remote paganism, and recalls the sacrifice of the boar to Frigga, the wife of Odin, king of all the gods, at the festival of mid-winter.

To Scandinavia we must also look for the origin of the hanging up of mistletoe at Christmas. This is also a pagan custom and is a relic of Scandinavian mythology. It is not, as many writers seem to assume, of Druidical, or even Catholic root. I have read that

- (1) The plant must on no account be hung in churches;
- (2) That it is an essential part of church decoration;
- (3) That it was the sacred plant of the Druids.

I recommend any seekers after the truth of such pagan customs to remember that, as a race, we have a considerable Scandinavian admixture and to read either the very interesting Scandinavian and Teutonic mythology, or else to get a copy of a child's history, as issued to the schools in Denmark. Still better, let them go to Denmark, Norway or Sweden; every child in these

countries will be able to tell them that Baldur the Good, the son of Frigga (who is not the same as Freya, as some writers seem to think, Freya being Thor's wife and Frigga the wife of Odin), was treacherously killed by Loki, who used a javelin or dart made of mistletoe wood; for this little plant had been overlooked by Frigga, who had not included it in the list of those woods which should not hurt her son. Afterwards, to show that no blame was attached to the innocent plant for the crime, it was made sacred to Freya and endued with healing properties provided it did not touch the earth, which was Loki's kingdom. This belief in the magical power of mistletoe came to England with the Vikings and, in proof thereof, we hang up the bunches, so that it cannot touch the earth, and kiss under it to show that it has lost its power for evil.

The Christmas Mummers of the Cotswolds are still in existence, and the plays they perform are some hundreds of years old. The players are usually five in number, viz. Father Christmas, Saint George, the Doctor, the Turk and an old woman. After the fight between the Turk and St. George, the doctor comes to revive the dead infidel. His remedies are quaint:

“Give him a bucket of dry hot ashes to eat;
Groom him down with a bezum stick;
And give him a yard and a half of pump water to drink.”

The play and the battle between St. George and the Turk are much the same all over the country, although a great deal of local lore and local topics are brought in by one or more of the characters. I can well remember in Surrey, when I was a boy, the Mummers performing in the hall of my grandmother's house where I was staying for Christmas. When St. George killed the Turk, the latter fell, and a bag of red fluid on his chest was burst to represent his life-blood. The Mummers had used a particularly obnoxious brand of cheap scent coloured red for the purpose, and it was New Year before the smell entirely disappeared!

To Whalton in Northumberland every lover of old customs and traditions must pay his respects, for there two ancient ceremonies have survived which have been allowed to vanish into oblivion everywhere else in England. The first of these is the fashioning of the "Kern Baby" to greet the harvest home. That this custom prevailed elsewhere we can clearly see from a book written in 1598 by Paul Hentzner and called *A*



A CORN DOLLY

Journey into England. Having been to Windsor, he wrote: "As we were returning to our inn we happened to meet some country people celebrating their harvest home; their last load of corn they crown with flowers, having besides an image richly dressed, by which perhaps they would signify Ceres. . . ." I think that there can be little doubt that the "Kern Doll" or "Kern Baby," which rides triumphantly on the last load of harvest, is the "Ceres Baby" or "Corn Baby," and was once an invocation to Ceres, the goddess of harvest and

plenty, to grant the farmer good crops for the coming year, as well as thanksgiving for the crop he had just harvested.

In that splendid book, *Shepherd's Country*, Mr. H. J. Massingham tells of his search for the Corn Dolly or Neck, and of his great difficulty in finding one. He also quotes Hawker of Morwenstow, who thus described the "crying of the neck":

"The man who reaps the last sheaf waves it, runs off a little and shouts thrice, 'We have un,' The rest cry 'What have ye?' Answer, 'A Neck! A Neck! A Neck!' Then they plait this Neck (the last handful) into a kind of web with the ears upward, and bring it to me to hang up to a crook in the ceiling over the Dining Table."

Variations of the Kern Baby or Kern Doll, Neck, Cock or Cross were to be found at one time in almost every parish church, but to-day they are rare indeed.

Whalton's second great survival is the lighting of the Baal Fire on St. John's Eve. This is actually a continuation of the worship of Baal, condemned in such strong language in the Old Testament, and there can hardly be an older custom in the country. On July 4th, the huge fire is collected with all manner of old ceremony, and in the evening it is lit, and the inhabitants dance round it for hours. They used at one time to jump through the flames, and this was obviously the old rite of "passing the children through the fire" that is mentioned in the Bible. If still more evidence is wanted that this is the true origin of these fires, we can find it in the fact that at the time when they blazed all over the country on St. John's Eve, the festival was called "Beltan" or "Bal-tein." These fires are to be found to-day in Brittany, and were also lit all over Scotland and Ireland in the eighteenth century; but they have vanished everywhere except in Whalton during the last hundred and fifty years.

England has always been a land of customs, but one of the most common of them has, it would seem,

become much modified since Tudor times. Erasmus wrote to Andrelinus in 1500:

“If you knew the wealth of Britain you would put wings on your feet and fly hither; or, if your gout prevented you, you would certainly wish to be a Daedalus. For, to mention but one thing out of a number, there are here ladies divinely beautiful, the kindest and most fascinating creatures in the world, far before the Muses whom you worship. There is besides a custom which it would be impossible to praise too much. Wherever you go everyone welcomes you with a kiss, and the same on bidding farewell. You call again, when there is more kissing. If your friends call on you, they kiss you, and when they take their leave kisses again go round. You meet an acquaintance anywhere and you are kissed until you are tired. In short, turn where you will, there are kisses, kisses everywhere. And if you were once to taste them, and find how delicate and fragrant they are, you would certainly desire, not for ten years only, like Solon, but till death to be a sojourner in England.”

XI

CURIOS TENURES (1)

THE Law of Properties Act of 1925 seemed destined to strike a shrewd blow at the many curious tenures still existent in England; but, strangely enough, in many cases it has had the opposite effect, reminding the property tenants of half-forgotten Acts of Serjeanty, which they were supposed to perform and which, in many cases, they have since revived.

One of the oldest and strangest forms of quit-rent is still existent in London and is performed yearly at the Law Courts in the Strand (48). Many accounts of this ceremony have been published from time to time; but I have found that they have all been more or less inaccurate, so that I am glad to be able to include the correct procedure, as well as the correct origin, in this volume. For this I wish to take no credit myself, but must express my gratitude to Sir George Bonner who, during his term of office as King's Remembrancer, devoted an immense amount of valuable time and trouble to tracing the origin of these rents. He very kindly placed his own notes at my disposal, and I quote freely from them in the following account of these services.

The quit-rents were, for many years, rendered in the Court of the Exchequer before the Cursitor Baron, and at the same time the ceremony of the presentation of the Sheriffs of London by the Recorder of London was also observed. In 1856 the office of Cursitor Baron was abolished, and in 1859 the Presentation of the Sheriffs in the Court of the Exchequer was also discontinued. In that year (1859) it was provided by the Queen's Remem-



91. START OF THE PROCESSION FOR THE KNELL MAUSOLEUM,
ST. IVES, CORNWALL.



92. CHILDRENS' MAY-DAY GARLANDS, ABBOTSURY,
DORSET



93 DISTRIBUTION OF SILVER FROM A TOMB IN HARTFIELD CHURCHYARD, SUSSEX



94 "WROTH" MONEY FOR THE DUKE OF BUCCLEUCH, KNIGHTLOW HILL, STRETTON-ON-SUNSMORE, WARWICKSHIRE

brancer Act that these quit-rent services should be rendered to the Queen's (King's) Remembrancer on the morrow of St. Michael, or between that day and the morrow of St. Martin, that is to say towards the end of October.

The first Service is rendered in respect of a piece of waste ground called the "Moors" in the County of Salop, or, as it is better known to-day, Shropshire. When the warrants have been read, filed and recorded in the special court presided over by the King's Remembrancer, who wears full judicial robes and wig, the latter then "makes proclamation" as follows: "Tenants and Occupiers of a piece of waste ground called 'THE MOORS' in the County of Salop, come forth and do your service."

The City Solicitor, representing the Corporation of London, then takes a bill-hook and a hatchet and proceeds to cut up some sticks, first with the one and then with the other. The King's Remembrancer then says: "Good Service," and the bill-hook and the hatchet are handed to him by the City Solicitor.

The actual origin of this service is lost in antiquity, but there are very early notices of it in old authorities. The earliest occurs in the thirteenth year of King John. Later, in 1245, it appears from the Great Roll of the Exchequer that, in the Michaelmas term of 29 Henry III, one, Nicholas de Mora, paid at the Exchequer two knives, one good and the other very bad, for certain lands which "he holds of the King in Capite, in Mora." Eyton, the author of *Antiquities in Shropshire*, identifies this land with a place called Bolabec, to which there is a reference in Domesday Book. "The Earl Roger, himself (i.e. Roger de Montgomery, Earl of Shrewsbury), holds Bolabec—Stenulf held it in King Edward's time—Here is half a hide geldable—the arable land is for one ox team—It was and is waste." Other entries in the Red Book of the Exchequer and the Great Rolls give the names of the tenants, such as Richard le Mener and Nicholas de Medler, while it is recorded that, in 1292, William de la More of Erdynton rendered the

service. This place, now called Eardington, by the Severn, is in the parish of Quatford about two miles from Bridgnorth. This seems to give us the position of the Moors, and a licence, dated May 3, 1524, to John Adams to alienate "The Moor in the County of Salop" to John Heweson, a Mercer and Citizen of London and to one Gresham and their heirs, seems to show how the Moors came to be in the hands of the Corporation of London, for surely the step from the "Mercer and Citizen" of London to the Corporation of London, even if untraceable, is at least highly possible.¹ The change from the knives, "of which one must be of such strength that a Knight . . . holds a hazel stick of one year's age and of one cubit's length and striking the said stick with a weak knife makes little or no mark on the stick and a good knife at the first stroke on the stick ought to cut it in half . . .," to the hatchet and the bill-hook has unfortunately not yet been traced, but even this point will be cleared up in time. The two implements now pass into the hands of the King's Remembrancer at the conclusion of the service.

The second service is ushered in with the words, "Tenants and Occupiers of a certain tenement called 'The Forge' in the parish of St. Clement Danes, in the County of Middlesex, come forth and do your service." The City Solicitor then counts out six gigantic horse-shoes and sixty and one nails. The King's Remembrancer says, "Good Number," and the ceremony is over.

So far as the Forge is concerned, the actual site is probably now a matter of certainty. For many years it was believed to be in Milford Lane, leading to the river from the Strand and opposite to St. Clement Danes Church. There is an entry of the grant of the Forge in the Great Roll of the Exchequer, 19 Henry III A.D. 1235, to Walter le Brun, a farrier in the Strand, who was to have a piece of ground in the parish of St. Clement to place a forge there, he rendering yearly six horse-shoes

¹ Author's opinion.

and sixty and one nails for it. A further entry in the Roll of 1 Edward I A.D. 1272 states that Walter le Marshal (Mareschal) paid this quit-rent and speaks of the site as being opposite to the Stone Cross. The Stone Cross, by tradition, stood near the site of the Church of St. Mary-le-Strand, close to Somerset House. The doubts as to the site of the Forge have only recently been dissipated by Mr. Stamp, the Deputy Keeper of Records in the Public Record Office. In March, 1935, Mr. Stamp discovered an entry in the Patent Rolls, 45 Henry III in the years A.D. 1258-1260. Putting it shortly, the entry recites the grant of an additional piece of land to Walter le Mareschall (*i.e.* Walter the Farrier), which is described as being in the Gore (*i.e.* a triangular piece of land) between the Church of the Danes (St. Clement Danes) and the Stone Cross on the north side of the road to Westminster. This grant describes accurately the measurements of the frontages, and the result is to place a gore, or triangle of land, with its base along the north side of the old Strand between St. Clement Danes and the site of St. Mary Church, with the frontage of the Forge somewhere in the base of the triangle. This would put the Forge partly on the site of Australia House, or perhaps on what is now the roadway in front of Australia House, which is as accurate a description of the site as one can expect. The six horse-shoes, which are pierced for ten nails each, and the nails which together form the quit-rent for the Forge, have been preserved for centuries in the office of the King's Remembrancer, and are produced every year for the purpose of the ceremony.

In contrast to these very ancient quit-rents, there are two interesting tenures which date from comparatively modern times. In Windsor Castle, in the Guard Room over the Gateway, among the treasures preserved there, the eye is caught at once by two French flags hanging on the wall, one to the right and one to the left of the magnificent suit of armour of the King's Champion. Unfortunately, the visitor in summer to the Castle stands

small chance of finding out anything about the innumerable historical treasures of the State Apartments, for by a recent lamentable decision of "the powers that be," no guide accompanies visitors through the apartments and they are herded through (there is no other expression for it) in as short a time as possible. The two flags, one the golden Fleur-de-Lys on a white field and the other the more familiar tricolour, are fastened to the wall above the busts of the Duke of Marlborough and the Duke of Wellington respectively. These two great generals were given great estates by a grateful Sovereign and people: Strathfieldsaye to the Duke of Wellington and Blenheim Palace, Woodstock, to the Duke of Marlborough; but the generals and their descendants had, and have, to pay quit-rent for these estates. Thus every June 18th (Waterloo Day) the Duke of Wellington has to replace the tricolour with a new one before twelve noon, and the Duke of Marlborough brings his Fleur-de-Lys standard on the anniversary of the battle of Blenheim (August 2nd). These are called Acts of Petit Serjeanty, in which the tenant need not act personally but must render, or pay, certain things to the King, as his landlord, annually, in much the same way as we commoners pay rent. Grand Serjeanty, on the other hand, is the rendering of a personal service, and there are examples of both these forms still to be found in England.

On the occasion of the visit of King George VI to Scotland, the family of Houison-Crauford fulfilled an act of Grand Serjeanty. They hold the farm of Braeside in return for services rendered to King James of Scotland on condition that, when the King comes to Holyrood House, they must bring a basin of rose-water, ewer and napkin to wash his hands. This ceremony was duly performed in 1937.

The offices of Grand Serjeanty that are performed at the Coronation are dealt with in the chapter on royal ceremonies. These are so many and varied, and there is such a keen desire to perform them, that the Court of

Claims, which sits for some weeks prior to the Coronation under the presidency of the hereditary Earl Marshal of England, the Duke of Norfolk, has often some little difficulty in settling disputes. This, combined with the number of unusual quit-rents paid recently, is encouraging to lovers of old customs and traditions, and really seems to show that, no matter how modern our country is becoming, its love of tradition and custom will never die.

XII

CURIOS TENURES (2)

I HAVE experienced great difficulty in tracing many of the curious tenures of England, for our authorities seem to have relied very often on hearsay and not to have troubled to go to the root of these customs, or even in some cases to find out whether they still exist at all. At first I failed to understand the reason for this, but, after many fruitless enquiries and visits, I have been forced to acknowledge myself beaten. Some of the holders of certain lands either could not or would not inform me whether the ancient quit-rents were still paid or not. I must express my gratitude to Mr. Potts of Banbury, the author of an excellent book on the famous Rhyme of the Cross, who made it quite clear that the rent of one hundred and forty hens and thirteen hundred eggs which used to be paid to the Bishop of Lincoln was abolished at the time of the Reformation, although a contemporary writer speaks of it as still existent, even forgetting the fact that the Bishop of Lincoln now has nothing to do with Banbury at all, as it is now in the diocese of Oxford. A very interesting example of the payment of a toll or rent for certain privileges and rights over land is to be found in Warwickshire. On Martinmas Eve, in November, the Duke of Buccleuch receives payments from certain parishes in the Hundred and Liberty of Knightlow in return for a right of way across his Manor for the purpose of moving cattle (94). This is called the payment of "Wroth Silver"; the word seems to be of Anglo-Saxon origin and to be derived from the words "rother heyder" or "cattle money," although some writers seem to prefer to derive it from

“worth,” meaning a road. At sunrise the Duke’s steward meets the representatives of the parishes at Knightlow Cross on the top of Knightlow Hill; each of these representatives in turn steps forward and throws the amount of the toll, which varies from one penny in some cases to two shillings and threepence in others, into a hollow in the great stone which was formerly the base of the Cross, saying as he does so, “Wroth Silver.” The forfeit for non-payment is twenty shillings for every penny of the amount, or a white bull with red nose and red ears. In all there are twenty-five parishes, and the total amount paid is nine shillings and fourpence. After the ceremony those taking part are entertained to breakfast at the Duke’s expense at the “Dun Cow” at Dunchurch. This old custom goes back to Saxon times, and a confirmation of the charter, which is in the Duke’s possession at Boughton House, was given by Charles I and again by Charles II.

In many cases customs in connection with tenures have never been abolished but have sunk into disuse, only to be revived; they seem to appear and disappear continually according to the ideas and tastes of either the tenant or the Lord of the Manor at the time. Therefore many tenures which I have included may have died out temporarily, and again others may have been revived. I therefore intend to mention several of the strangest, without vouching for the fact that they are paid at the present time.

The Forest of Savernake was granted to Lord Ailesbury provided that he should blow an ancient horn on the occasion of the King’s visit to the estate. Both tenure and horn date from the reign of Henry II, and this service was demanded by King George III at the beginning of the nineteenth century on the occasion of his visit to Savernake. The Lord Ailesbury of the time duly had the horn brought to him, and then blew a rather feeble blast; but the service was performed and the King was satisfied. This service of Grand Serjeanty is still in force and, should His Majesty cross to the

Channel Islands, he will find many more such performed there, for the Seigneurs of Guernsey, Jersey, Alderney and Sark have innumerable feudal customs dating from the eleventh century, most of which were celebrated on the occasion of the last royal visit, that of King George V, to the islands. The Seigneur of Rozel must ride his horse into the sea, until the water reaches the saddle-girths, to meet the King, who is still the Duke of Normandy to the islanders, and during the time of his stay, must act as his butler. The Seigneur de Sau-marez acts as the King's Cupbearer, an appointment dating back at least to 1299, when we have accounts of it being performed. During the visit of King George V the Seigneur insisted that his was the right to hand round the teacups in default of wine goblets. Spurs, falcons, and two mallards with their beaks gilded are others of the feudal quit-rents presented or paid by the Seigneurs to their Duke.

Blount's *Antient Tenures* gives a list, which is amazing in its variety and also very significant of the humorous disposition of some of our sovereigns. One tenant had to hold the King's head if he should ever be seasick when crossing the sea. Another, the tenant of Shirefield, had the task of supervising the King's laundresses. Other tenures remind us of sterner times, such as that of guarding the King's person when he visited certain places or providing armed retainers for certain journeys. The King's own private weapons were provided by several of his tenants. Drakelow furnished his yew bow and a quiver containing twelve arrows, Carleton, his catapult, Sholey, a pole-axe, and Pole, a sword to the value of three shillings and fourpence. Hunting was a great feature of the life of the King in the Middle Ages, and the manors in the country and near the forests provided horses, as Felsted in Essex, the home of the great public school where Richard Cromwell was educated, or greyhounds, hawks and falcons. Many had duties to perform, such as ridding the royal forests of vermin, wolves or foxes. Nor was it only the King who

had the monopoly of these services. The Bishops and the great nobles of England also let out their lands in return for weapons, hunting gear and animals.

Kingston Russell in Dorset was held on condition that the tenant counted the King's chessmen after a game and put them away in a bag; Hoton in Cumberland by a tenant who had to hold the King's stirrup when he mounted his horse at Carlisle Castle; whilst Shrivenham in Berkshire was held by the Becketts, provided they met the King whenever he visited the town and presented him with two white capons. On the occasion of the Selkirk Common Riding, one farm along the route has to pay its quit-rent by providing refreshment for the cavalcade, and one of the most interesting of all tenures exists, even if it is in abeyance, at Caistor in Lincolnshire. On Palm Sunday a representative of the tenant of Brigg came to Caistor Church during the service and cracked a whip three times in the porch to remind the priest of St. Peter's three denials of Christ. He then brought the whip into the church and fastened to it four pieces of elm, representing the four Gospels, and a purse containing thirty pieces of silver. This whip was then held over the head of the preacher during the sermon and afterwards left at the Vicarage. The origin was a penance imposed by the Church for a treacherous murder (hence the thirty pieces of silver), and, although both the House of Lords and the Bishop of Lincoln were petitioned by the Lord of the Manor in the middle of the last century that this service might be abolished, both had to confess that they were powerless to do this. Therefore, although the custom was dropped by mutual consent, it has not been abolished and is only in abeyance at the present time. Chingford in Essex likewise boasted of one of the most curious manorial tenures in England; but, whether this service is still carried out, I have been unable to ascertain. Whenever the estate in question changed ownership, the new owner had to ride to the Vicarage with his wife, one manservant and one maid-servant, and with him he

had to bring a hawk and a greyhound for the use of the Rector! He blew three blasts on a horn on his arrival and was then given a chicken for his hawk, a loaf of bread for the hound, and a peck of oats for his horse, by the Rector. Three more blasts on the horn and he might ride away in the certain knowledge that his quit-rent was truly and justly paid.

There are many strange and unusual articles stipulated in these tenures, such as one pound of black pepper in Sussex; 100 herrings by the Lord of East Carlton on behalf of the town of Yarmouth to the King, the herrings to be made into pies; a red rose at Christmas and a snowball at midsummer in Yorkshire; honey, nails for the King's ships, one clove, three grains of white pepper, and, in short, almost anything that the wit and ingenuity of the first lessor could devise. At Stockton in Yorkshire a piece of land is held by the provision of a petticoat for one poor woman of the town, and the piece of land is called "Petticoat Hole" to this day.

The Lord of the Manor of Lamburne in Cornwall receives quite a collection when he sends his Reeve on Candlemas Day to the farm-house of Godolphin. The Reeve knocks three times on the door and says: "I come to demand my lord's just dues, eight groats and a penny, a loaf, a cheese, a collar of brawn and a jack of the best beer in the house. God Save the King and the Lord of the Manor!" Near the Inkpen Beacon in Hampshire is the Combe gallows. The tenants of Eastwick Farm are bound by their tenure to keep these in repair, and a charity in Combe depends on its being fulfilled.

Before closing this chapter on strange tenures a few lines must be devoted to two systems of tenure that were still in force up to 1926. The first of these is "Gavelkind," which was to be found in Kent, where concessions were obtained from William the Conqueror in the eleventh century and their liberties and rights, including that of Gavelkind, were confirmed to the

tenants. This proves the Anglo-Saxon origin of the custom and confirms Tacitus' account of the Germanic origin of this form of tenure. Gavelkind provided for the division of property on the death of the owner among all the sons, and, failing these, among all the daughters, and prevented the forfeiture of the estates in case of an accusation of felony. The word was derived from the old English "gavel," a gable, and takes us back to a time when a man's substance was sometimes estimated by the number of gables, i.e. bays, of his house.

The second system was that of "Borough English," or "Cradle Land" tenure, and could be found in London in Lambeth, Heston, Fulham, Islington and Hackney, and also in Wiltshire. This system laid down that property, in the absence of a will, descended to the youngest son and not to the eldest, and once again the origin is Saxon. It was generally supposed that the youngest son was not in a position to fend for himself on the death of his father, as were his elder brothers, or else that the elder sons were in the habit of leaving home to carve out careers for themselves, leaving the youngest at home to inherit the father's property or business. Even up to 1926 both Gavelkind and Borough English were systems of tenure which were legally recognised, but Lord Birkenhead's Administration of Estates Act of 1925 finally ended them on January 1, 1926.

XIII

ARMY CUSTOMS

TRADITION and the Army! The words seem almost synonymous, for surely no other corporation or organisation is more eminently suited to the culture and preservation of old ceremonies. Even the manuals on drill, saluting, musketry, guard-mounting and guard-changing, and the thousand and one details of a soldier's life have not altered much in the course of time, except in so far as appertains to the use of new weapons, new equipment and new formations. It is to the Army in time of peace, and not in time of war, that we must turn for our ceremonies and customs. Trooping the Colour, Beating Retreat, the Tattoo, especially at Aldershot, we know them all; but behind each of them is a reference to the history and traditions of the service. I wonder how many citizens of England know to-day the details of Sir Ralph Abercromby's victory at Alexandria over the French army, which had been left in Egypt by Napoleon after his retreat had been cut off from France by Nelson at the battle of the Nile. Some will think of it, and of the great story of the defence of Acre by Sir Sydney Smith, when they see that statue of Sir Ralph Abercromby in St. Paul's Cathedral, with the look of agony on the face of the wounded general. Every man in the Gloucestershire Regiment, however, would be able to tell them all about it, for the Gloucesters proudly wear two cap badges, one in front and another behind at the back of the cap, that it may never be forgotten how their comrades of 1801 fought back to back to break the French attack at Alexandria.

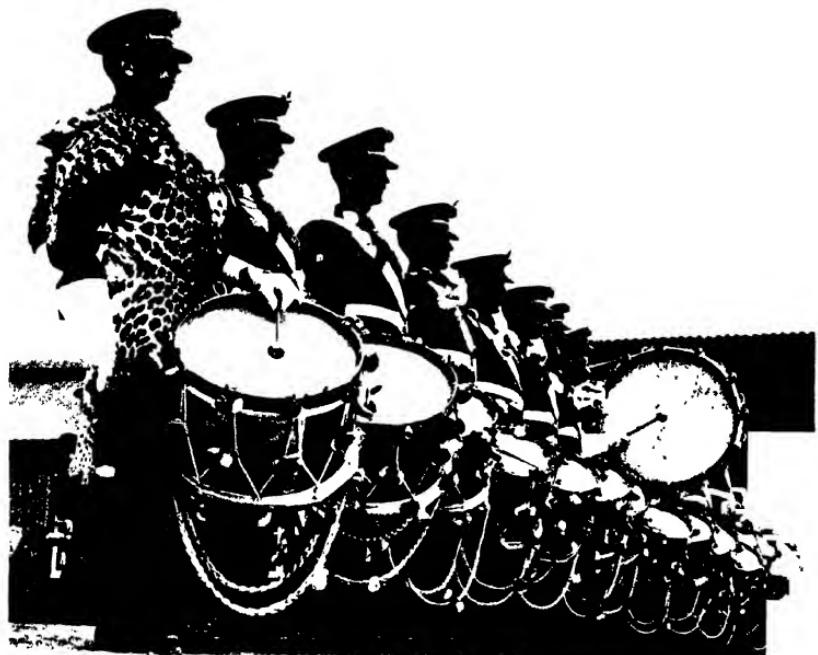
The battle of Minden was fought on August 1,



95 AN EARLY CHANGF OF GUARD ON THE HORSE. GUARDS PARADE



MARCH-PAST ON OAK-APPLE DAY,
CHELSEA HOSPITAL



97 DRUMMERS OF THE NORTHUMBERLAND FUSILIERS AT THE
MARCH-PAST ON THE COLOUR ON ST. GEORGE'S DAY

1759, and six famous regiments, manœuvring through a private garden, plucked the roses growing there and fastened them in their caps just as the soldiers sometimes did in the Great War and still do to-day. But those six regiments, the Hampshires, the King's Own Scottish Borderers, the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, the Lancashire Fusiliers, the Suffolks and the Royal Welch Fusiliers, greatly distinguished themselves in the fighting that followed, and now every year on the first day of August their men wear red and white roses in their caps.

Every St. Patrick's Day, March 17th, is celebrated by the Irish regiments of the British Army, or those few that still remain, by the wearing of shamrock in their caps; this leaf St. Patrick plucked to illustrate the Mysteries of the Holy Trinity to their pagan forbears.

The Welsh leek, like the Minden rose, reminds us of a great victory, and, like the shamrock, of a patron Saint, for on March 1st St. David of Wales won a great victory over the Saxons. In the *Festa Anglo-Romano*, dated 1678, we can read that ". . . the Britons on March 1st constantly wear a leek, in memory of a famous and notable victory obtained by them over the Saxons; they, during the battle, having leeks in their hats for their military colours and distinctions of themselves, by the persuasion of the said prelate, St. David."

Great soldiers of the past are remembered by the regiments closely connected with them; thus the line of black in the gold lace worn by such regiments as the East Surreys, the East Yorkshires, the Gordon Highlanders and many others are a permanent sign of mourning at the passing of General Wolfe at Quebec in 1759, or of Sir John Moore at Corunna in 1809.

Just as London has several ancient privileges peculiar to it, so those regiments connected with, or recruited from, the City in the past, notably those descended from the old train-bands of the City, have privileges of their own when in that area. These regiments are the Buffs, the 2nd Battalion of the Gloucesters, the 3rd

Battalion of the Grenadier Guards and the Royal Fusiliers (the City of London Regiment); they are the only battalions in the army which are allowed to march through the City of London with bayonets fixed and Colours flying.

Mention of the Colours conjures up visions of Caesar's legions with their Eagles, the standards carried into battle in the Middle Ages, and the regimental standards which, again and again in history, have cost the lives of their gallant protectors. In Roman times the necessity of some rallying-point in battle, together with the idea of fostering *esprit-de-corps* in the men of a unit, led to the granting and carrying of Eagles, and the Regimental Colours of to-day are their descendants. The capture of an Eagle, or of the enemy's colours, has always been deemed one of the greatest triumphs in battle; in the same way one's own colours had to be protected and preserved at all costs. Colours are not now carried into battle and have not been since the Zulu War, but to-day we salute them as they pass us on the street, for they represent the honour of the regiment. Its great deeds are commemorated by them, for all battle honours granted to the regiment are emblazoned on its colours. French regiments carried colours during the Great War, and one of these was captured by the Germans at Bois Grenier in 1915 and hung up in a tree in full view of the French and English lines. An English officer, Walter George Fletcher, went across no-man's-land at night and succeeded in recapturing it, though it cost him his life; the French regiment later presented the colour to Fletcher's old school, Eton, where it hangs in the Chapel to this day.

Before going on to describe a few of the army ceremonials, mention must be made of the "flash" worn by the Welch Fusiliers. This knot of black ribbon worn at the back of the tunic collar is the last relic of the wearing of pigtails by soldiers. The Welch Fusiliers were the last regiment to give up wearing them, for they were at sea when the order of abolition was issued

in 1807 and so did not know of it until after the other regiments had dispensed with them. The Welch Fusiliers applied for permission to retain the "flash" and this was granted to them, so that they are now the only men in the British Army to have retained the "grease protector" to this day.

Almost every regiment would have to be mentioned if all the army customs were included here; but space does not permit and so a very great number have had to be omitted. But these pages would be incomplete if a few of the greater ceremonials of the army were not included. Every night at the Tower of London the warders lock all doors and gates, and these only open to the password before the morning (4). The guard is turned out, an escort provided for the "King's Keys," and challenge and answer ring out over the grey walls of London's fortress.

"Halt! Who goes there?"

"The Keys!"

"Whose Keys?"

"King George's Keys!"

"Pass King George's Keys! All's well!"

Until finally at the guardroom the Chief Warder removes his Tudor bonnet with the words "God Preserve King George!" and the whole guard answers: "Amen!"

The origin of this interesting ceremony is unfortunately lost, but it has been carried out for many hundreds of years and is now familiar to every owner of a wireless set. To my knowledge, the wording has only been varied once in recent years, and that was on the night that Queen Victoria died. The new King had been Prince Albert Edward and had not decided whether to assume the title of King Albert or King Edward VII, so that night the Keys were called simply "The King's Keys!"

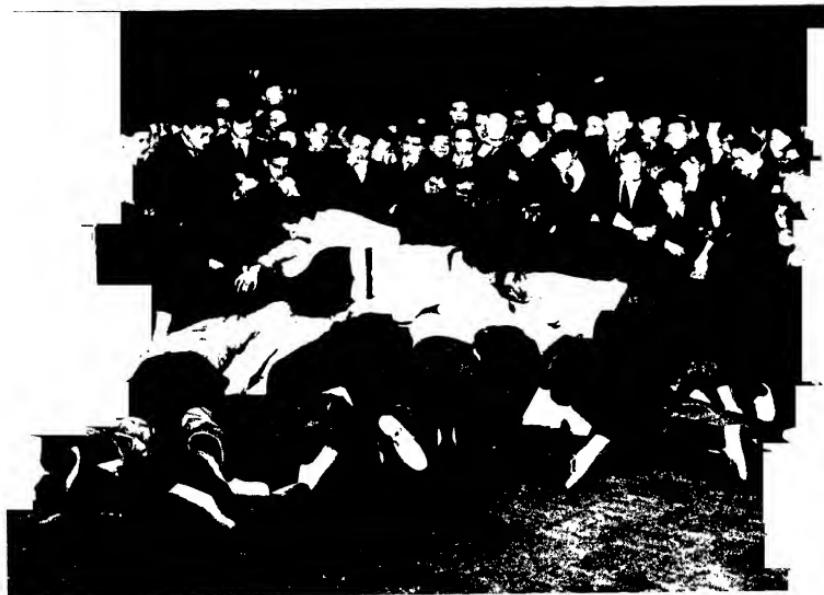
Broadcasts have also been heard recently in many thousands of homes of the Beating of Retreat, the Tattoo, either at Aldershot or at Tidworth, and the Trooping of the Colour on the King's birthday. The

first of these commemorates the retreat of the French Army at Waterloo, and the Tattoo in its original form was a glorified version of the same. To-day, and especially at Aldershot, it affords a splendid spectacle of the pageant of the army's history. The Trooping of the Colour (97) is really a special form of guard-mounting, calculated to show honour to the regiment whose Colour is being trooped, and was at one time the regular form of the mounting of the guard at the royal palace. A shortened form (17, 95) is now the custom and attracts hundreds of sightseers every day, whilst the more elaborate Trooping of the Colour is kept for the occasion of the King's birthday (18).

To return to individual regiments, there is a curious custom in the 12th Lancers. The band plays a hymn tune outside the Officers' Mess every night at ten o'clock, and the same custom exists in the 10th Hussars, where a bequest was left for this purpose. The hymn played by the band of the 13th Hussars is the survival of an order by the Duke of Wellington, who imposed this punishment on the regiment for misdemeanours in the Peninsula.

Often the regiments carry wreaths of laurel on the Colours on the anniversary of some great encounter. This is always done by the Guards on November 5th, Inkerman Day, and can then usually be seen at the Changing of the Guard at the Palace.

The Army is justly proud of its record, and the *esprit-de-corps* of each and every regiment is well symbolised in the survival of old customs and ceremonies. May the Cameronians long *sit* to drink His Majesty's health, the 8th Hussars wear their "Saragossa" crossbelts, and the "Fighting Fifteenth" (15th Hussars) their scarlet feathers, which they so gallantly won at Villers-en-Couché.



98 THE SCRAMBLE AT THE SHROVETIDE TOSSING THE PANCAKE, WESTMINSTER SCHOOL.



99 "CROSSING THE LINE,"—after shaving with Neptune's razor the subject is toppled into the bath. The gas masks supply a modern touch



100 WETBOBS WITH BEARDS AND MOUSTACHES, ETON

CUSTOMS IN SCHOOLS, AT SEA, AND
MISCELLANEOUS

OUR great public schools are brimming over with tradition, and it is a heartening thought that this form of education will continue to foster the love of it in the minds of boys. Most schools have customs peculiar to them: the dress of the Eton (105) and Westminster boys, the straw hats which are worn all the year round at Felsted, the quaint headgear of the Harrovians (102), and so on. Shrove Tuesday is a great day at Westminster, for then the pancake is tossed over the bar in the school room and, as it falls on the other side, the boys scramble for it (98). At one time every boy in the school took part, but to-day each form has one representative, and the boy who manages to secure the largest piece is rewarded with a guinea. The Westminster boys also have the privilege of being present at State functions such as the opening of Parliament, and their right to a place of honour at the Coronation, where they lead the cheers, has never been questioned. Westminster is not the oldest public school, but its connection with the Abbey has given it a unique position among the schools.

Eton's celebrations on June 4th, and the procession of boats, are well known, but the school has many other customs that are perhaps not. After a birching the delinquent was formerly allowed the privilege of retaining the birch as a memento (or a warning), and many of the great homes of England are embellished with these fearsome weapons. Nowadays, however, the culprit may only keep the small pieces of birch twig that

break off during the ceremony! The members of Pop at Eton, a society of very limited numbers which was formerly a debating society, also have privileges of their own, such as the use of the Chapel side of the road to Windsor, which the eleven hundred odd other scholars may not use. They alone may wear a particular type of waistcoat and use buttonholes. The Eton Montem custom has disappeared, but on February 27th the Provost presents every Colleger with a threepenny piece. A Mr. Rede of Burnham, who died in 1514, left a sum of money to provide twopence a head for the Collegers to say obit service for him, and Provost Lupton, who died in 1535, left the other penny. The Eton wall-game, which is played between the Collegers and the Oppidans, is still an annual custom, although personally I have never quite been able to understand its object or its rules.

Before passing on to ceremonies unconnected with the schools, mention must be made of Christ's Hospital, or the Blue Coat School as it is more usually called. Its costume, consisting of a long blue coat, yellow stockings and low shoes, was the normal dress of a schoolboy in the sixteenth century, but to-day only the boys of Christ's Hospital at Horsham can obtain it. On Easter Tuesday they visit the Mansion House and receive Easter gifts from the Lord Mayor of London. These consist of newly-minted coins, buns and lemonade, which last has replaced the wine formerly given.

Although Wales should not, strictly speaking, be included in a book dealing with English customs, it would not, perhaps, be complete without some mention of the Eistedfodd, the Welsh national festival. The festival was recognised by Edward III, and Henry VI, the founder of Eton College, granted certain rights to the Druids; but it seems impossible to discover exactly how old this festival is. Its object has always been the cultivation and preservation of national poetry and music, and surely no more laudable purpose can be

found. Its probable origin is druidical, and the Arch Druid is the "Chairman," if that word may be used in this connection. On his hill, standing on the Arch Druid's Stone, he makes his speech, and then the great sword is brought before him. He half draws it and calls "A oes Heddwch?" (Is it Peace?), and the answer thunders back, "Heddwch!" Three times this is done, thus establishing a truce during the period of the festival. There is here a marked resemblance to the "fencing of the court" at the Thingwald festival in the Isle of Man. It therefore seems likely that both these customs date from a time when it was very necessary to establish peace on an occasion of this sort and suspend blood-feuds and quarrels. How well and truly the Eistedfodd has fulfilled its purpose through the ages is apparent to any visitor to Wales, for surely nowhere else will you find such wonderful singing and such a universal knowledge and appreciation of good music as in the Principality.

England, too, has its Druids, who assemble every year at Stonehenge to see the sun rise on June 21st over the Friar's Heel. Whether Stonehenge is Druidical or not I will leave to those who have devoted a lifetime to its study; but this attendance there on the longest day of the year has been carried out for long enough now to be termed a custom.

A custom existing in London has been difficult to place. It is connected both with the City and the Army; but I have finally compromised by including it in neither. Every night a detachment of the Guards takes over the guarding of the Bank of England (31); this custom dates from the time of the Gordon Riots, when the Governors of the Bank feared for its safety. The bank provide a supper for the officer in charge with a bottle of wine, and beer for the men; but the transport of the soldiers to and from the bank, when necessary owing to bad weather, must be provided out of the pocket of the officer. The guard is mounted with bayonets fixed; and, although the usefulness of this

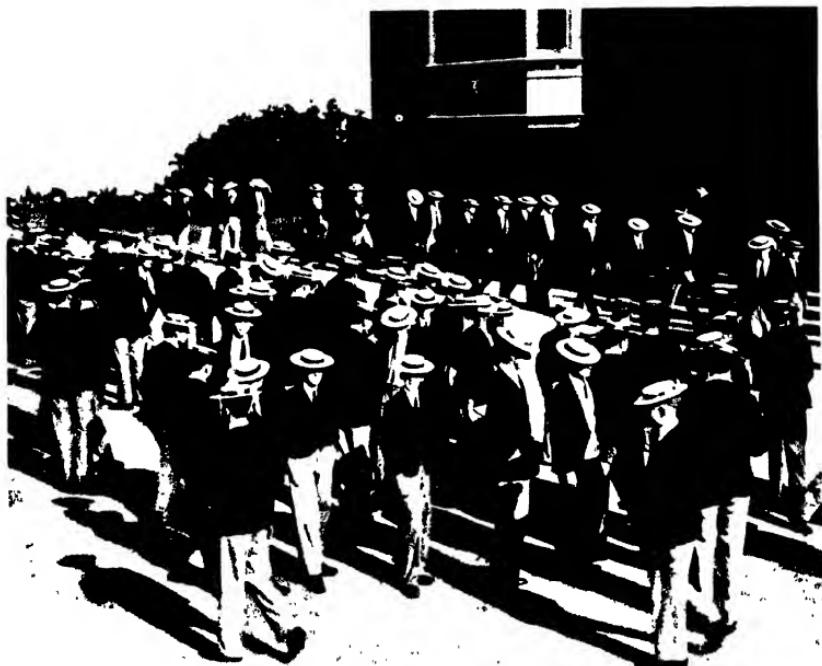
watch is rather doubtful to-day, the custom is maintained.

In the smallest county in England, Rutland, home of the hound and the scarlet coat, there is a queer custom. Oakham Castle demands tribute from every peer of the realm who passes through the town in the form of a shoe from his horse. How long this custom has been in existence is impossible to trace, but Queen Elizabeth supplied a giant shoe in 1556, and at the other end of the scale we find that King Edward VII paid his tribute in 1895; while both King George VI and his brother, the Duke of Windsor, paid their toll when hunting in the district. The people of Oakham are proud of their collection, which is displayed on the castle walls, and are ever on the watch for peers though perhaps, owing to the rapid disappearance of the horse as a means of transport, they will soon have to change the shoes for tyres!

England has always been the home of the seaman, and the sea, too, affords its quota of tradition and custom, though most of its old usages are superstitions and therefore not included here. We have often watched the launching and christening of some great ship; but many of us, I am sure, have not realised that, although we call it "christening," the ceremony is as old as Greek and Roman civilisation. Formerly every ship was equipped with an altar and when, for the first time, she entered her natural element, the Romans, Greeks, Vikings, and in fact all seafaring folk, used to sacrifice to their gods on this altar, so that fair winds and good fortune might follow her keel across the seas. Oil and wine were poured out upon it, and the Vikings even "reddened their keels," as it was called, by fastening wretched prisoners to the rollers over which the ship should pass down to the water, whilst prayers to Neptune, Thor, Odin or whoever the particular god might be, were offered. To-day, the bottle of champagne that is broken over the bows is a last remnant of this sacrifice; but if we listen carefully to the words of the



101 A BEADLE ESCORTS THE COOK WITH THE PANCAKE
TO THE TOSSING, WESTMINSTER SCHOOL



SIDWELLNESS: ROLL-CALL AT HARROW ON SPEECH DAY



SCRAMBLE: THE ST. ANDREW'S DAY WALL-GAME AT ETON,
SEEN FROM ABOVE.

christening, we shall find that the same prayers are uttered to the God of the sea.

The altar on board ship is also remembered for, when the naval officer sets foot on the quarterdeck, his hand goes automatically to the peak of his cap in a salute. He is really saluting the place where the altar, and perhaps an image of the Virgin, were to be found in the Middle Ages.

The best known of all sea customs is the ceremony that is performed when a ship "crosses the line." Neptune comes on board with his wife and the court officials, the barber and the bears being the most important. Anyone who has not sailed across the Equator before is seized, lathered with some noisome concoction, shaved with an immense razor of wood and then tipped backwards into the swimming bath, where the "bears" are waiting to duck him (99). I have spent a great deal of time tracing this ceremony through the ages, for it is one that our modern writers on customs seem to have neglected, and I have found that it has a perfect right to a place among the time-honoured customs of the country. Formerly the ducking of an apprentice to the sea was done when the ship passed well-known capes or even islands, and, strangely enough, it seems that a young seaman, who was tipped overboard at the end of a rope and not ducked in a canvas swimming bath as is the custom to-day, was thus forcibly reminded of these important landmarks in much the same way as the boys of the parish were bumped, or beaten, during the ceremony of the Beating of the Bounds. Later, as scientific navigation took the place of coastal voyages by guess and landmarks, the "line," or equator, was chosen for the observance of this custom, which, during the course of centuries, has developed into the "rag" it is to-day.

Fishermen are seamen, and the fisherfolk are the most superstitious of all seamen, so perhaps that is the reason for the continuance of the Garland ceremony at Abbotsbury. Many pagan customs have been continued with

a veneer of Christianity; for instance the Baal Fires became the festival of St. John, and the Venus Temple in Malta the Church of St. Venera, although there is no such Saint in the Christian calendar. Here, in the fishing village of Abbotsbury, is another example. The fishermen and their children fashion garlands of flowers (92) which are rowed out to sea—so far we have the worship of Neptune; but then they are rowed back again and instead of being thrown overboard, are carried up to the church. Most probably, as a village rector once told me, the teachers of Christianity found these pagan rites so firmly rooted that it was impossible to destroy them altogether, so they compromised by changing (officially) the object of the observance, until later generations should become more used to the worship of the new God.

XV

FINALE

IT has been my hope, while writing these pages, that they may contribute in some way, however small, to the preservation of the old customs of this country. Many times during the preliminary work I started out to trace some interesting tradition only to hear from someone, "Oh! that was discontinued long ago." I returned, sadly disappointed, to try my fortune elsewhere. Our traditions are deeply rooted in our history; to destroy the one is to destroy the other in the long run. Many writers and thinkers maintain that the English tradition is one of the strongest rivets in the fabric of the Empire; but, just as rust will slowly destroy steel, so this tradition can gradually be brought to decay by so-called progress and modernism. Here and there I have had the chance to discuss the preservation of old customs with those who believe that all such "anachronisms," should be dropped, and I have put one question, or rather two, for the second arises naturally from the first: "What do you term a custom?" and "How long must a certain form of procedure, or ceremonial, exist before it becomes a custom?" To these scoffers at one-time honoured ritual and observance, I would recommend that they search through their own lives. They would certainly discover that they themselves have often practised the very things they would see destroyed.

When a man raises his hat to an acquaintance, he is only repeating the gesture of his forefather, who raised the visor of his helmet to show that he was a friend. The removal of the glove before shaking hands testifies

to the absence of any weapon, or poisoned ring, and, if we would include the new salutes of the many political parties (even the most bellicose), the raised hand signifies peace.

As we have our modern survivals of ancient rituals, so perhaps our descendants, and theirs in their turn, will still keep the lamps of Toc H burning. Toc H is, as we all know, a relic of the Great War, and the spirit of Toc H has been furthered by the Youth Camps established by His Majesty, the King, when Duke of York.

Nearly twenty years after the end of the Great War we take it as an established custom that November 11th should see the King and the representatives of the Services, the veterans and the Government, gathered together with the people of England in Whitehall, and at other memorials all over the country, to pay tribute to those who fell; and the same winter evening sees thousands of small wooden crosses on the Field of Remembrance outside Westminster Abbey, to be burnt later and the ashes scattered on the battlefields of France and Belgium. Surely the deriders of tradition would not see such things decay, or the memory of their fathers, brothers and cousins pass away.

It is the *custom* to buy our roses on Alexandra Rose Day, partly to help the hospitals, and partly in memory of the one who did so much in their support, Queen Alexandra. It has become a *custom* to wear primroses on April 19th in memory of that great statesman, Lord Beaconsfield, a custom established by the whole-hearted efforts of a comparatively small group of persons. All over the country are such groups, and it is to all lovers of traditions that this book appeals to do their utmost to preserve and maintain them in the district in which they live.

In the offices of a certain Urban Council, which has allowed an old Statute Fair to vanish, I was told, "A very good thing it has too! Three days of pandemonium disturbing and hindering business . . ." and a lot more



1-5 STRAW HUTS IN NEW & LINGWOOD'S
WINDOW, LTON



1-6 LTON LILLIS ON THE SPOT IN THE CROWN H-VEL,
TOWER OF LONDON, WHR KING IN SRY VI
WVS MURDERED



106 ROLLING THE LAD ROUND THE YARD



107 BUILDING THE BARREL ROUND THE LAD

Trussing an Apprentice in a barrel on his twenty-first birthday, at a Birmingham brewery

in that vein. If business is the sufferer in that person's opinion, then I maintain that he is no business man. Honiton Fair attracted thousands of visitors in 1937, as did Mitcham Fair, whether it is a modern custom or an old Charter Fair, and visitors mean the spending of more money in the locality, and that again spells prosperity. Some of the old ceremonies, such as the Hungerford Hocktide festivities or the Helston Furry Dance, undoubtedly bring trade; and, if further proof is needed, let us consider for a moment the eleven millions of foreign money that was spent in London during the one week of the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of King George V. No! Business and custom or tradition need never clash, and our civic authorities should not allow old institutions to vanish, unless there is a real reason for it.

In some cases admittedly, such as St. Bartholomew's Fair at Smithfield, where the festivities deteriorated into mere rowdyism and excess, the authorities have been forced to intervene, but this has not always been the reason. The true cause of decline can be found in the modern mentality, that can no longer find enjoyment in the simple pleasures that delighted our ancestors, although it is not only industrialism that is responsible for the decline. Owing to the kindness of Mr. Tucker I was invited to the works and offices of that great printing house, Messrs. Spottiswoode & Ballantyne. I spent a most interesting and instructive time and was interested (as who would not be) in the press that was used to print the first edition of the *Waverley Novels* and the chair in which Sir Walter Scott wrote his books. I was duly impressed with the tremendous improvements achieved in the art of printing, and wondered at the ingenuity of the brains that could invent such complicated and efficient machinery. At midday we were standing in the type-setting room when, as the modern electric clock showed 12, we were suddenly transported back to the Middle Ages. The workers had been watching the clock and, at the exact moment, each

seized one of the heavy metal frames in which the type is arranged and a small bar of iron. They hammered on the frames with such force that it was as if a dozen blacksmiths had gone suddenly crazy. At the moment when I thought my eardrums would burst, the noise ceased. The workshop cat that had been lying on the bench sat up, yawned and proceeded to wash its paws.

“What on earth was all that?” I asked.

“Just an old custom,” I was told.

I had found old ceremony in the very heart of its destroyer, industry, and I asked for details. I learned that every worker in the shop has had, at one time, to serve a period of apprenticeship. This usually lasts for seven years, and is always timed from midday to midday. At twelve noon on the day the period of apprenticeship ends, all the fellow-workers celebrate the event by “banging out the apprentice.” This was what I had been privileged to witness. In the printing trade the old ceremonies attached to apprentices are still observed. In charge of all the workers is “the Chapel,” and to be elected a Father of this is a very high honour indeed. The Chapel deals with all matters concerning the welfare and behaviour of the workers and its first question to a new employee is for a sight of his trade membership card. This he can possess only if he has served his time as an apprentice, and the Chapel has absolute power in this respect. Without the card they will see to it that the man does not work in the trade.

This proof that old usages can flourish even in modern industrial concerns was a great encouragement, and perhaps research will show many more instances of this sort.

Critics of our country areas blame farmers for their conservatism and for the tenacity with which old ways and methods are preserved. When we come to consider reasons we find that this is only natural. Before the invention of locomotives, villages were, in some cases, completely isolated and cut off from their neighbours. The villagers were dependent on themselves

alone for amusement and relaxation. Thus they observed Whitsun and other Church Ales, Easter Pace-egging, May Day celebrations, morris dancing, fairs and festivities. To-day there is always a cinema within comparatively easy reach, a wireless set to provide music and news all day and every day, whilst cheap railway excursions to the towns have placed the theatre and the music-hall within the reach of almost all. The modern farmer is a scientist, chemist, motor-mechanic and many other things combined. He has to be able to keep pace with modern markets. Yet he is the descendant of the English yeoman-farmer of the seventeenth century, of whom Sir Thomas Overbury wrote in his *Characters* in 1614:

“His outside is an ancient yeoman of England, though his inside may give arms (with the best gentlemen) and ne'er see the herald. There is no truer servant in the house than himself. Though he be master, he says not to his servants, ‘Go to field,’ but ‘Let us go’; and with his own eye doth both fatten his flock and set forward all manner of husbandry. He is taught by nature to be contented with a little; his own fold yields him both food and raiment; he is pleased with any nourishment God sends, whilst curious gluttony ransacks, as it were, Noah’s ark for food, only to feed the riot of one meal. He is ne'er known to go to law; understanding, to be law-bound among men, is like to be hide-bound among his beasts; they thrive not under it: and that such men sleep as unquietly, as if their pillows were stuffed with lawyers’ penknives. When he builds, no poor tenant’s cottage hinders his prospect; they are indeed his alms-houses though there be painted on them no such superscription. He never sits up late, but when he hunts the badger, the vowed foe of his lambs; nor uses he any cruelty, but when he hunts the hare: nor subtlety but when he setteth snares for the snipe, or pitfalls for the blackbird; nor oppression but when, in the month of July, he goes to the next river and shears his sheep. He allows of honest pastime, and thinks not the bones of the dead anything bruised, or the worse for it though the country lasses dance in the churchyard after evensong. Rock Monday, and the wake in summer, shrovetings, the wakeful

ketches on Christmas Eve, the hockey or seed cake, these he yearly keeps, yet holds them no relics of popery. He is not so inquisitive after news derived from the privy closet, when the finding an aerie of hawks in his own ground, or the foaling of a colt come of a good strain are tidings more pleasant, more profitable. He is lord paramount within himself, though he hold by never so mean a tenure; and dies contentedly (though he leave his heir young) in regard he leaves him not liable to a covetous guardian. Lastly to end him; he cares not when his end comes, he needs not fear his audit, for his *quietus* is in heaven.”

Thus deep-rooted in his heart, the farmer and yeoman, more than any other, reveres and preserves, if possible, the old usages. But the farmer of to-day has difficulties to contend with of which his ancestors knew nothing. Farm workers are scarce, for the long hours from dawn to dark for wages which are only a fraction of those to be earned in the neighbouring factories where a job means free Saturday afternoons and every evening as well, have no attraction for the young people of to-day. Foreign competition, in many cases State-subsidised, has deprived the English farmer, first of his profits and secondly of the home market itself, so that in most rural areas there is little cause for gaiety. To offset this, the town-dweller, with his theatres, his cinemas, his wireless and his music-halls, has become sated with these amusements; and gradually, especially during the last two years, interest in the old observances has been aroused.

It is ignorance that is the chief foe to the preservation of old customs, ignorance and the superficial indifference born of defective education. Often the old ceremonies are not appreciated because there is no one to tell of them —they have only to be known for it to be realized what they contribute of historical interest and of picturesque pageantry. As an instance, take Swan Upping, of which a very brief outline will be found on pp. 40-41.

After some four hundred years the ceremony of Swan Upping is carried out with a wealth of minute pageant-

ritual; actually the nicking of the King's birds was discontinued some thirty years ago at the personal request of Queen Alexandra; the birds are merely rounded up and examined, but the Companies' swans are still "upped" as heretofore. We owe much to the kindness of Mr. F. T. Turk, His Majesty's Swan Keeper, who tells us that the King and the Vintners' and Dyers' Companies each supply two boats; in the first royal boat is the King's Master and a crew of three, with a pair of oars between two single oars; this boat alone has two flags, of which the colour and design, even the details of the attaching tapes are minutely prescribed. The other five boats are rowed by two single oars, and each bears a single flag, of which the Vintners' incorporates three tuns and the Dyers' three bundles of wood. The uniforms of the men are worked out in much detail in red or blue stripes.

It is a characteristic touch that Henry VIII claimed the monastic swans when he seized the rest of the property of the monasteries. Indeed, he claimed the ownership of all swans on the Thames, but he was so indebted to the rich and powerful Vintners' and Dyers' Companies that they continued their swan-owning privileges. All the birds on the Thames are considered to be of royal ownership, and when one of the Duke of Norfolk's famous flock of black swans strayed on to the Thames, it automatically became the king's property, and a request for its return could not be entertained.

Running commentaries by the British Broadcasting Corporation, and films in the news reels, of local customs have borne proof that, as a whole, the public is gaining interest in these customs. The press, too, have published accounts of fairs and customs, even devoting whole columns to such things at a time when war, revolution and national disasters provided news enough to fill a journal. I, and probably many more, have noticed these things, and it is a sign which is extremely welcome. There is nothing wrong, fundamentally, with the character that can find pleasure in the simple things. Thus, perhaps, when our Government has done some-

thing to improve the lot of the farmer and his labourers, when both are more contented and more prosperous, we may witness a strong revival of some of the old rites of the countryside which to-day are almost extinct.

It is with the hope that such a day may soon come, and that new interest in our old customs may be aroused, that the last words of this book are written.

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